POLITICAL EDUCATION, DEMOCRACY AND YOUTH'S PERCEPTION: THE VISION FROM HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ABOUT POLITICS

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Abstract

Political education has challenged general principles of democracy and, above all, has been at the center of parliamentary schools. Despite the activities, it seems quite reasonable to start with an initial idea that we need to know what young people think about politics, democracy, elections and parties. From then on, we will reflect about actions aimed at this public in parliaments and in society in general. Based on this idea, the objective of this work is to understand, through quantitative research, comparing cities, which young people of the third year of high school in a set of public schools in Belém-PA, Macapá-AP and São Paulo-SP think about politics and how they relate to the theme. It is assumed that there is interest of this public by the politics and that the results do not differ between cities.

Keywords: political education, political literacy, youth, democracy.

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few years, the efforts of parliamentary schools to establish themselves as spaces for political education have been remarkable. From the seminal work of Cosson (2008) and special volumes of Cadernos Adenauer journals of 2010 and 2016, and of E-Legis of 2011 it is possible to notice that legislatures spread throughout Brazil, at different levels of government, as well as researchers and organizations from different sectors of society, engage in studies and actions linked to the general principles of political education, political literacy and related terms[5].

In addition to all these efforts, another relevant agenda associated with the challenges of educating for the exercise of democracy is related to the attempt to understand the extent to which young students in public schools want to have contact with formal policy content, and what they understand about topics such as democracy, political parties and parliaments, for example. Such perception is essential, since this public, coming from elementary and / or high school, is

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[5] The discussion on the terms Political Education, Political Literacy and related terms was held by Jardim (2018).

usually in the center of attention of those legislatures that have schools or educational programs and, from this, develop actions such as "young parliament", "course of political initiation", "monitored visits", etc. – To this end, comprising the performance of parliamentary schools in different challenges, see Fuks and Casalecchi (2016); Cosson (2016); Silvestre, (2016); Birth, Silva and Seino (2016); Dantas and Schiavi (2015); Rocha and Vieira (2011); Rocha (2011); Kelles and Marques (2010).

The perception of this interest and involvement of young people with politics can be captured in texts such as those by Dantas and Caruso (2011); Forlini (2015); Nascimento, Silva and Dantas (2016); Dantas (2018; 2016) concerned with observing what students think about politics from educational activities; as well as Dantas and Estramanho (2015); Pedreira (2015); Mayumi and Pedreira (2016) about what youth in general perceive about terminologies, attitudes and values associated with democracy and political participation. It is noteworthy that in this first block of studies, specifically associated with what public school students perceive about politics, the central focus was on the state of São Paulo. Works involving Dantas focus on the metropolitan region of the capital, while Forlini (2015) works in Araraquara, a city in the interior of São Paulo, as well as Nascimento, Silva and Dantas (2016), who look at Araraquara and Suzano (cities of Greater São Paulo).

Given this spatial restriction, the purpose of this article is to apply the questionnaire that Dantas uses in free courses of Political Initiation in the peripheral areas of Greater São Paulo, an activity started in 2008 in partnership with the São Paulo Legislative Assembly[6] and the Konrad Adenauer Foundation of Brazil, in students from six public high schools in the cities of Belém, capital of Pará, and Macapá, capital of Amapá. The choice is predominantly justified by issues associated with the idea that geographical distance and cultural diversity in relation to São Paulo could emerge as variables capable of altering the results of the objective of apprehending the youth's view on politics. Do students offer the student of public schools in Macapá and Belém citizens who see basic aspects of politics differently from the feeling from São Paulo regarding the same phenomena and concepts?

Despite the distances and cultural differences, the central hypothesis of this work is linked to the idea that such sharp differences between such realities will not be verified. Such expectation would be in line with the conclusions of Nascimento, Silva and Dantas (2016) that compared political perceptions of public school students from Suzano, Greater São Paulo, and Araraquara, a city in the central region of São Paulo State. The authors do not find such expressive differences in the way students perceive aspects of politics, which prompts the search for the results presented here. Moreover, they would be close to the conclusions of Martins Jr. and Dantas (2004), who found no regional differences when analyzing the results of the 2002 Brazilian

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[6] The activity still exists today, but the parliamentary school of the Legislative Assembly is no longer a partner of the actions.

Electoral Study (ESEB) and concluded that the distancing of citizens from politics was independent of geographical aspects. That said, in addition to this introduction, where we point out the hypotheses and justifications for this study, the paper contains a brief theoretical framework of discussions on the relevance of political education, followed by the analysis of the results found in schools in the two cities of the Northern region of the country, compared with São Paulo, and finally the conclusions.

Theoretical aspects

Understanding how the citizen relates to the politics is essential for the true exercise of citizenship. "Citizen participation allows individuals to know about community issues that would be reserved for elected public authorities and professional managers of the municipality" (SISK, et al, 2015, p. 25).

Bobbio (1986) understood that "political education" was part of a set of unfulfilled promises of democracy. The popularization of the vote and the logic of the universality of suffrage drove away the discussion about the specific preparation of citizens for the fulfillment of a democratic agenda. What some educators have conventionally called political literacy, as COSSON (2010) shows us, represents: "the process of appropriating practices, knowledge and values for the maintenance and enhancement of democracy" and "the one that takes place in the context of politics, that is, the ability to interact politically".

Crick (1998) understands the term "political literacy" as "not only knowledge of political and social institutions and ideas, but also the skills, values and attitudes that are necessary for the practice of good citizenship in adulthood". Thus, all political literacy must be guided by values or attitudes that underpin and favor democratic life, such as tolerance, diversity in social relations, interdependence, equality, equity and freedom. The great benefit of political literacy at school is to provide the empowerment of students "to participate effectively in society as active, informed, critical and responsible citizens" (QCA, 1998).

According to Dantas (2016) proper and specific actions of political education do not generate immediate increase of confidence of young citizens in typical political institutions, but at least make them realize the importance of information and specific knowledge about politics as an indispensable element in the qualification of the vote, synonymous with the exercise of citizenship in representative democracies.

Faced with this challenge, a study by Niemi and Junn (1999) shows that formal civic education in schools, centered on the Constitution and the functioning of government, has an impact on students' political knowledge. According to the authors, students acquire content, for example, about citizens' rights and about the functions of local and state governments, even though they present little significant results in political theory and political parties.

Also, reiterating such a fundamental need for political education, Saviani (1995, p. 66)

reaffirms the indispensability of prioritizing, specifically in school curricula, "meaningful" content, such as political education, which is the subject of his work, and also brings another justification for the insertion of political contents in schools:

> Therefore, it seems fundamental to me to understand this and that, inside the school, we act according to this maxim: the priority of contents, which is the only way to fight against the farce of teaching. Why is this content needed? Precisely because the mastery of culture is an indispensable instrument for the political participation of the masses. (SAVIANI, 2007, p. 61)

It should also be considered that *strictu sensu* political education, being taught and practiced in schools, must pay attention to critical, problematizing, autonomous principles, and towards the practice of freedom, leaving any authoritarian and doctrinal and domestication purposes aside. Only in this way should political education be fully exercised and will assist in the formation of conscientious citizens committed to the construction of a transformative political project (DANTAS, 2017). Only in this way can we increasingly deepen our democratic values and move towards a more equitable political system and society (PELLANDA, 2016). Thus, political formation would prove to be a tool of emancipation and autonomy of the citizen who wishes to understand society and perceive himself as a constituent agent and transformer of realities.

According to Rezende (2010), in Brazil, civic or political education in school formation has assumed ambivalent and even secondary status. In the history of national education, during the twentieth and early twentieth centuries, there was a discontinuity of initiatives to establish specific disciplines and spaces in the curriculum to address the issue, and such policies, in most cases, occurred in authoritarian contexts, associating the alleged study of politics in schools with indoctrination. Also according to the author, the civic issue or formal politics is precariously studied and discussed by specialists, educational policy makers and society in general. Notwithstanding this, the format of this content may vary in terms of the comprehension offered by the educator. Estramanho (2016), for example, understands that there is no clear need for formal discipline, and the same path for such content has been offered under the logic of the transversality of official documents since the 1990s. The return of Sociology and Philosophy to schools in 2008, however, would represent a new look, but it is not the objective of this study to delve into this theme.

Still, a significant portion of Brazilian students is formed without political content in schools, where the vast majority cannot distinguish the roles played by each of the three powers and characteristics of the electoral system. Rocha and Vieira (2011) point out that "political literacy with coordinated actions, especially those that make school and teachers fundamental partners to involve young students, is an interesting opportunity to bring the topic of political institutions and parliament to the classroom".

Thus, the school should assume roles that lead the students to develop critical thinking, encouraging them to question the facts to make their own decisions. "Political philosophy associates democracy with two key issues: participation and education," explains Dantas (2010). Thus, the question arises as to whether education would have this function of educating for citizenship, for life in society.

According to Kahne and Westheimer (2003), the teaching of democracy is still considered a second-order issue for schools and governments that reserve tiny percentages in their budget and practically ignore the theme in official tests of intellectual competence. Thus, despite the discourse on the importance of education to sustain and strengthen democracy, most schools assume the theme only as a discourse, that is, a rhetorical act, without support and without the need for practice.

These aspects reinforce the idea of the value of capturing the perception of young people about politics as capable of dimensioning the challenge of educating politically. Dantas (2016) drew a profile of high school students from Greater São Paulo capturing positive perceptions about the roles of these agents as citizens, as well as the perception of the concept of democracy and elections. There are more studies aimed at demonstrating that, far from being cynical or apathetic, young people may not even be interested in the formal political system, but engage in social issues that concern them, such as gender, ethnicity and class relations, as well as they resent the absence of autonomy and exclusion from the formal political world (O'TOOLE; MARSH; JONES, 2003).

Thus, knowing this universe about young people's perceptions about politics is a necessary and important task for the knowledge about the direction of democracy and its values in Brazil. And from these perceptions we face the challenge of comparing the results of the research done by Dantas (2016) in São Paulo with the perception of young people from the two selected capitals in the Northern region.

RESULTS AND ANALYSES

During 2016, forms were collected in São Paulo, and in September 2016, the forms were applied to the capitals of the northern region of the country. Given this, it is intended to understand something about the relationship of these young people with democracy and politics through a very simple form. It is important to highlight that the present work is not anchored in a scientific sample, but is characterized as an exercise with young people for diagnosis that allows comparing results collected by Dantas (2016) in São Paulo with the perceptions of students from two capitals of the Northern region of the country.

The application of the questionnaires was carried out in three state high schools in the peripheral area of Belém do Pará and in three state high schools in the peripheral area of Macapá,

capital of the Amapá state. The addressing of the interaction included the third year regular high school classes of the José Alves Maia, Dr. Justo Chermont and Waldemar Henrique schools in Belém, Pará state, and the Alexandre Vaz Tavares, Raimunda Virgolino and Nilton Balieiro schools in Macapá. In each of them, four groups were randomly chosen, two daytime classes and two at night, totaling twelve classrooms in each city. The result is the planning of 511 questionnaires, 272 in Belém and 239 in Macapá, seeking to observe the interest and level of understanding of these young people about aspects of politics and democracy.

In São Paulo, third-year youths were surveyed at state schools in the capital, namely: Renato Braga (south zone) and João Solimeo (north zone). In addition, students from this same stage of schooling were included in social projects aimed at young people from public schools, with emphasis on: the Julita Foundation (south zone), the Eurofarma Institute (south zone), the Redigir-USP Project (west zone), the IOS Institute (north zone), Crescer Semper (south zone), the Liga Solidária (west zone) and the CEU-Navegantes (special project) in the south zone.

The questionnaires are structured identically, starting with a minimal characterization of the respondents. The first question refers to gender. Results show that women outnumber men in both Belém (54.4%) and Macapá (62.3%). São Paulo was closer to the capital of the Amapá state: 62.2% women. These percentages are in line with recent IBGE[7] surveys that highlight the transformations in relation to the increased educational level of women compared to men. Between 2000 and 2010: "Of the approximately 4.9 million young people aged 15-17 attending high school, there is a higher proportion of women (54.7%) compared to men (45.3%)".

The second question on the questionnaire concerned age. The results indicate a great distance from the ideal of the Ministry of Education that young people between 15 and 18 years old have to be attending this stage of formal education. The reality of the cities of Belém and Macapá, with regard to the third year of high school, reveals a significant age variation, represented by 15-year-olds to 65-year-olds who seek the regular school to complete their studies. In the Northern region, 50% of participants reported that they were over 18 years old. Another issue that is evident in the surveyed public is that young people aged 16 to 17 who can exercise the right to vote represent 36.8% in Belém, 37.2% in Macapá and 66.6% in São Paulo. In the state capital of São Paulo, the age question pointed to an average age of 19 years old, with a range between 16 and over 50 years old, but a higher percentage of young people of the expected age for the third year of high school.

Having made the minimum characterization of the interviewees, the third question of the questionnaire dealt with the sources that the students use to obtain information about the political situation of their country or city. For the purpose of the debate on democracy this question is essential, since "alternative sources of information" are considered aspects that are fundamental

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[7] Taken from http://www.brasil.gov.br/cidadania-e-justica/2014/11/escolaridade-das-mulheres-aumenta-em-relacao-a-dos-homens, in 10/03/2016

to the functioning of democracy (DAHL, 2001).

In this question, the student could mark how many alternatives offered on the form were consistent with his / her reality, such as: TV, radio, magazines, printed newspapers, courses and lectures, school, internet sites, public events, conversations with friends and family, and social networks.

Table one shows that TV is the largest source of information on politics' facts for students, with over 80% penetration in all surveyed locations, and slightly higher emphasis in the Northern region. It is important to remember in this case that according to a survey conducted by IBGE[8] in 2015, 97.3% of households in the country had television. Another relevant highlight, shown by Dantas (2018), points out that in São Paulo, among 15 to 18-year-olds in public schools, the strength of TV decreased as a political information channel between 2015, when it was over 92%, and 2018, when it registered 82%.

Table 1 - Sources of information for politics' update used by students

Mass media	Belém	Macapá	São Paulo	Average
TV	90.07	92.05	83.15	**88.42**
Social networks	48.90	56.07	59.51	**54.83**
Web sites	43.38	45.61	55.16	**48.05**
Conversations and speeches	33.46	35.15	38.04	**35.55**
School	26.47	20.92	43.75	**30.38**
Radio	22.43	22.18	18.21	**20.94**
Printed newspapers	26.47	7.95	18.75	**17.72**
Courses and lectures	6.99	5.86	18.21	**10.35**
Magazines	7.72	5.86	14.40	**9.33**
Public events	6.99	11.30	3.80	**7.36**
Average	**31.29**	**30.30**	**35.30**	

Source: Authors Collection

In addition to TV, it is important to note that the other three most relevant channels find relative balance between cities. Two of them show the strength of the virtual universe, characterized by social networks and websites. In this case, it is necessary to remember that the number of national Internet users, between 15 and 32 years old, according to a survey by IBOPE Inteligência online business unit, was 96% of Brazilians who claimed to use the internet every day[9]. What seems to us here is that some of the young students do not recognize or disregard the

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[8] Taken from http://www.bbc.com/portuguese/noticias/2015/04/150429_divulgacao_pnad_ibge_lgb in 10/03/2016

[9] Taken from http://exame.abril.com.br/tecnologia/noticias/pesquisa-mostra-que-96-dos-jovens-usam-a-internet-todos-os-dias in 10/02/2016.

Internet, or even social networks, as a means of learning about politics. Despite such observation, Dantas (2018) shows that the perception of the use of such channels is increasing annually between 2013 and 2018, when among São Paulo students from 15 to 18 years old the sites jump from 49% to 57%, and the networks from 53% to 62% in the period. It is also relevant to highlight the possibility of an evaluation of the percentage of students who marked at least one of the two alternatives related to the virtual environment – social networks and websites – to gauge the potential of this universe in the search for information. In São Paulo, the indicator goes to 77%, very close to television. In Macapá reaches 68% and in Belém 59%.

According to Table 1, the conversations follow, but it is important to highlight that students from São Paulo place more emphasis on the school as a source of political information, something much higher than the percentage found in the northern cities.

In addition to the highlighted means for obtaining information, the following aligned items in the table show sharper differences between cities that may be associated with local characteristics or specificities of the schools and young people who participated in the survey. Despite these similarities, in the three cities, the average utilization of the channels offered is set at levels above 30 percentage points, similar to those obtained by Dantas (2018) over the period from 2016 to 2018.

In the following questions, the goal was to understand how young people think about politics, whether they see themselves in it, and how they relate to parties. The results show challenging aspects of representative democracy, associated mainly with neglect, discredit and remoteness, even though there is a recognition about the relevance of politics in reality.

Graph 1 – On the politics you would say that

Gráfico 1
Sobre a política você diria que:
2016
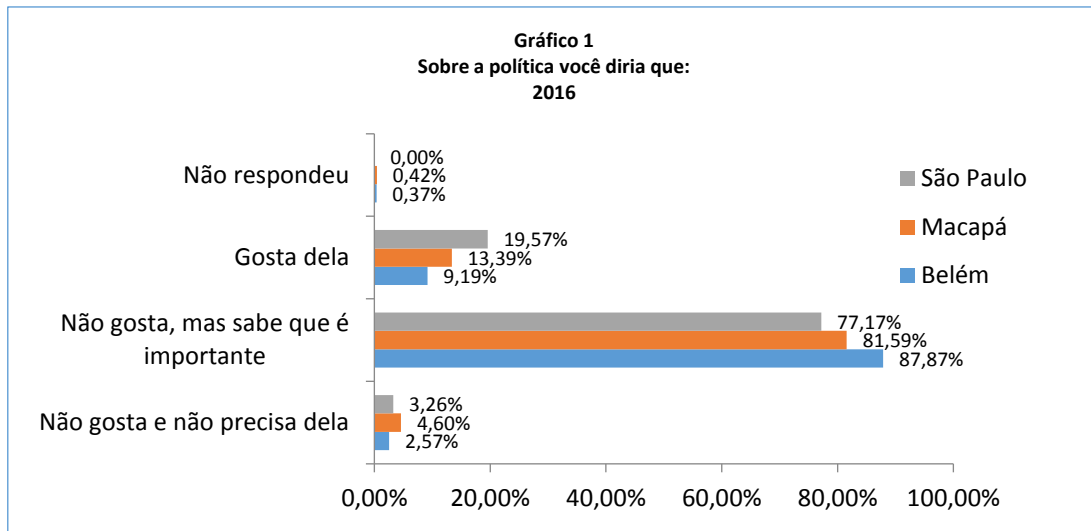
Caption: (top to bottom, left): did not respond. Likes it. You do not like it, but you know it is important. Dislikes and does not need it.
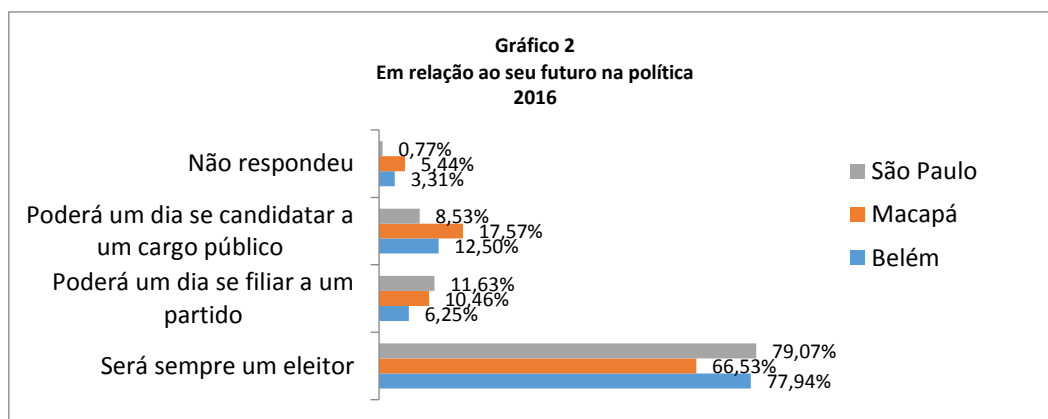**Source**: Authors Collection

In Graph 1 the goal was to understand if students liked politics, disliked it but they understood it as important, or did not like it and understood it as unnecessary. This last option has very low adherence rates in the three cities surveyed, which reinforces the important recognition about the relevance of politics in the reality of young people, as indicated by Pedreira (2015). The main difference between cities is the taste for politics versus the perception that despite disgust it has relevance. In São Paulo, almost 20% say they like politics, while in Pará this total is less than 10%. Are the respondents from São Paulo impacted by the fact that they are starting a course that would address the theme? Even if the questionnaires are answered before the activities? In the case of the northern capitals, it was filled in on a regular school day, without any prior preparation or extraordinary announcement. Despite this fact, we highlight the perception that the politics is considered relevant by huge contingents in all the surveyed places. The challenge, in these cases, is linked to the reflections of Dantas and Estramanho (2015), who point out that the critical position of young people from São Paulo on politics needs to become a more incisive set of actions for the construction of realities.

Graph 2, in turn, offers us the perspectives of the young people interviewed about their respective roles in representative democracy. The vast majority of them in the three cities understand that they will always be a voter, ranging from two thirds in Amapá to almost 80% in São Paulo and Pará. However, some consider the possibility of party affiliation and even candidacies. Of course, between the will expressed in a research and the actual action there are significant differences, but it is possible to point out that even in the face of disbelief and even an uncompromising position in the face of a simple question, portions of young people see

themselves closer to politics than they indicate in their own tastes. In other words, while almost 20% of students in São Paulo state that they like politics (Graph 1), the same percentage of them make such a statement regarding joining parties or being candidates. However, in Belém the taste for politics reaches 9%, while the possibility of membership and candidacy amount to 19%. In Macapá this logic is in 13% of taste against 28% of possible involvement. Two purely hypothetical discourses could concur (or complement each other) to explain such a phenomenon: to see politics as a means of survival, despite dislike, and / or to realize that even if it is something negative and important, the solution would be to participate more actively. Exploring these expectations further would be a good way to understand what young people expect from politics and how they perceive themselves in the formal logic of representation in future research.

To deepen this analysis, it is relevant to consider that in October 2018, Brazil had just under 150 million voters and 16.8 million party members. Of this total, just over 45,000, or 0.27%, were between 16 and 20 years old. Compared to the most recent census of the country in 2010, the total of young people from 15 to 19 years old was just under 17 million, that is, membership is not something that occupies the daily lives of younger citizens – about the relationship of young people with partisan life, the research by Brenner (2010) is relevant.

Graph 2 – Regarding your future in politics

Gráfico 2
Em relação ao seu futuro na política
2016

- São Paulo
- Macapá
- Belém

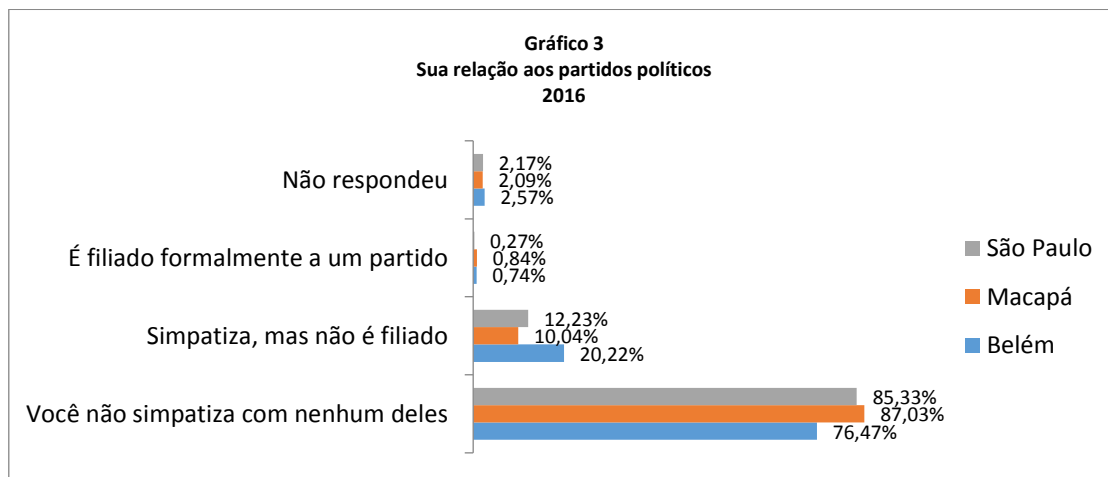|	São Paulo	Macapá	Belém
Não respondeu	0,77%	5,44%	3,31%
Poderá um dia se candidatar a um cargo público	8,53%	17,57%	12,50%
Poderá um dia se filiar a um partido	11,63%	10,46%	6,25%
Será sempre um eleitor	79,07%	66,53%	77,94%

Caption: (top to bottom, left): Did not answer. May one day run for political office. May one day join a party. Will always be a voter.
Source: Authors Collection

Seeking to deepen the understanding of students' relationship with political parties, Graph 3 seeks to determine whether respondents were formally affiliated with a party, if they were sympathetic to any of them or not sympathetic to any such association. The results show less than 1% affiliated in the three cities, reinforcing the above data. Thus, the others are divided, despite those who did not answer this question, between supporters and citizens distant from this type of organization. Belém has more than 20% of supporters, while Macapá registers half of that percentage. This is reflected among those who say they are not close to any party subtitles, and

while Macapá students have more than 87%, Belém students register just over three quarters in this condition. Historically, from 2013 to 2018, Dantas (2018) shows that the dislike of São Paulo students aged 15-18 to parties varied between 75% and 70%, respectively, between 2013 and 2014, rose to between 88% and 84% in the period from 2015 to 2018, reaching a peak of 89% in 2017. Such withdrawal results would be linked to what Dantas (2016) would call "lack of ability to understand and decode desires, and accentuation of conflicts and distances", which characterizes the young people's view of representative formal politics and the actions of the parties – the fact is corroborated by Pedreira (2015).

Graph 3 – His / her relationship with political parties

Gráfico 3
Sua relação aos partidos políticos
2016

Não respondeu	2,17% / 2,09% / 2,57%	
É filiado formalmente a um partido	0,27% / 0,84% / 0,74%	
Simpatiza, mas não é filiado	12,23% / 10,04% / 20,22%	
Você não simpatiza com nenhum deles	85,33% / 87,03% / 76,47%	

São Paulo
Macapá
Belém

Caption: (top to bottom, left): Did not answer. Is affiliated to a party. Sympathizes, but is not affiliated. Does not like any of them.
Source: Authors Collection

Reinforcing such perceptions, what can be called a widespread disconnection between politicians and citizens. More than that, it appears that although democracies are made through an "essential belief that the individual places on others to justly pursue matters common to all individuals," as observed by Bengt Sãve-Sõderbergh (2001), in the case at hand, what is perceived is the opposite, a complete departure from what it is to be really political in more formal terms.

The penultimate question in the questionnaire refers to the City Council and what it should do in local political reality. It is important to highlight this aspect, especially when it comes to the responsibility that parliaments have assumed in Brazil to increase the level of politicization of society through schools and educational projects that seek to strengthen democracy. Some of the alternatives offered for answering the form involve constitutional obligations of legislatures, but the form also provoked the respondent about more cultural aspects, as shown in the options in Table 2.

Table 2 – Young people's perception of "what a City Council should do"

| Alternatives presented	Belém	Macapá	São Paulo
Laws for the city?	68.01%	68.62%	70.65%
Festive events?	11.40%	9.62%	7.61%
Oversee the City Hall accounts?	60.29%	71.97%	49.73%
Defend corporate interests?	7.72%	8.37%	8.15%
Favors for the citizen (employment, money, etc.)?	57.35%	52.30%	40.22%
I don't know what a City Council does	9.19%	9.62%	11.41%

Source: Authors Collection

In all the cities analyzed, most of the students showed that they know what the City Council should do in formal terms. The responsibility of councilors to make laws is pointed by 68% of students from Belém, 69% in Macapá and 71% in São Paulo. Representatives, from the perspective of students, should also scrutinize the City Hall's accounts according to 60% of Belém students, 72% of Macapá students and 50% in São Paulo – São Paulo's capital here shows worrying results. It is curious to note that in the Amapá case, the oversight function overcomes the legislative logic, something rare in common sense. Also balanced among the three realities is the rate of young people who say they do not know what a City Council does, ranging from 9% in Belém to 11% in São Paulo.

When the form escapes the more formal constitutional obligations, the holding of festive events – often called Solemn Sessions – reaches low percentages, even as a result of the perception that the local parliament defends corporate interests. However, when asked about the City Council offering favors to the population (employment, money, etc.), significant parts of the students agree with this clientelistic practice: 57% in Belém, 52% in Macapá and 40% in São Paulo. This point is very close to research results of the Association of Brazilian Magistrates conducted in 2008 that showed a clientelistic position of more than 1,500 Brazilians interviewed by Vox Populi when provoked in relation to the functions of councilors.

The last question on the form presented the interviewee with a set of sentences in which he /she should indicate whether he / she totally agreed, agreed in parts, disagreed in parts or totally disagreed. The results are presented in Graph 4, converted into a concordance index in which the answers are quantified and transformed into percentages. The closer to 100%, the greater the full agreement, following the method used by Dantas (2016).

Graph 4 - Degree of agreement of students on general policy sentences
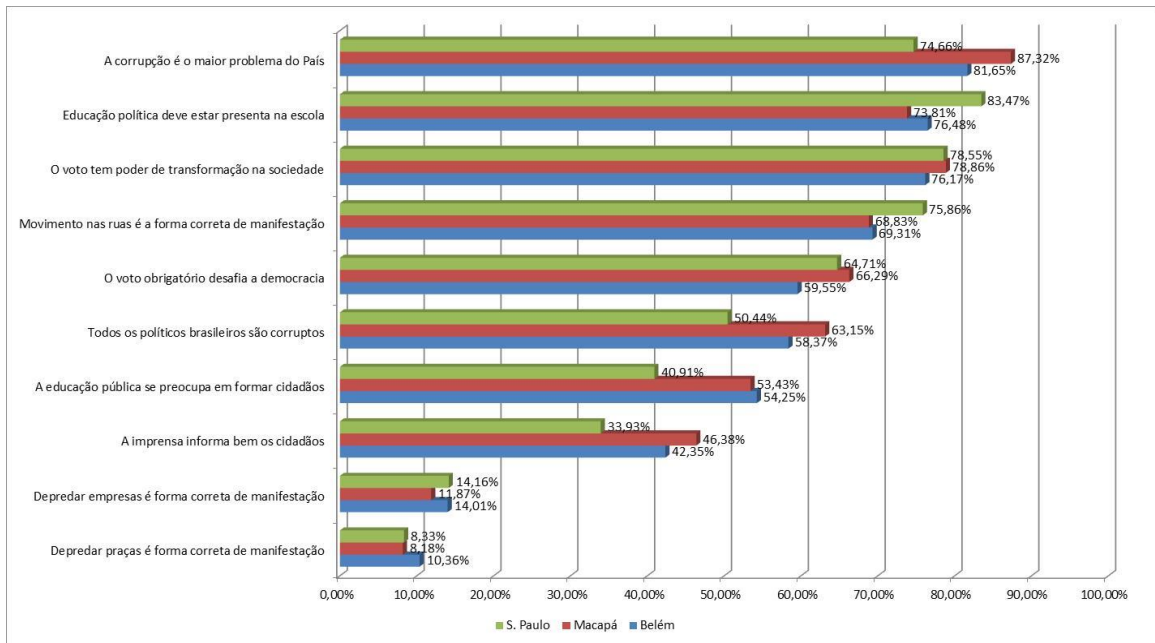
Caption: (top to bottom, left): Corruption is the biggest problem in the country. Political education must be present at school. Voting has the power to transform society. Manifestos in the streets is the correct form of manifestation. Mandatory voting challenges democracy. All Brazilian politicians are corrupt. Public education is concerned with forming citizens. The press informs citizens well. Depredating companies is the right form of manifestation. Depredating squares is a correct form of manifestation.

Source: Authors Collection

The responses follow relatively similar patterns across cities. Specifically, there are different degrees of agreement intensity, but it does not seem possible to say that there is an inversion of degrees of perception between locations in front of sentences. Here it is possible to divide the analysis into positive and negative points.

Positively there is high perception that corruption is a big problem in the country. The first step in solving something of this nature is to recognize the problem, and it seems possible to realize it – in Macapá the phenomenon is more meaningful.

Another important point is the appreciation, at least in terms of positioning, about the demand for political education in schools – something that other studies have already pointed out (DANTAS, 2016; PEDREIRA, 2015). Here the biggest highlight is São Paulo, but in northern cities, the agreement exceeds 70 points. The transforming power of the vote and the legitimacy of the street manifestos also stand out positively, and such aspects strongly connect students to the core values of democracy: the choice of representatives and freedom of expression. Two other considerably beneficial points are associated with low levels of agreement with public and private asset depredation gestures. Of course varying between 8% and 14% the position may worry, but the degree is low.

As negative and worrying aspects, we highlight the fact that apparently the press does not inform the citizens well – and in São Paulo the feeling is more acute. Another point is associated with the fact that the position about all politicians being corrupt is intermediate. This means that young people agree / disagree in parts, which could indicate that there are those who are honest. If this is true, the result can also be seen as positive. Relativizing would also be possible in the debate on mandatory voting to challenge democracy, a lively debate among young people who do not seem to like the compulsory character of voting – the discussion here deserves further study.

Finally, students understand that the public school – where they study and live – does not form the citizen, which reinforces, worryingly, the criticism about the lack of political education and perceptions about democracy and citizenship. The distance between this sentence and the one that seeks to understand whether students understand that politics should be taught in schools seems to illustrate a relevant critical sentiment. In São Paulo, for example, while the perception that public education forms the citizen is at 41 points, the one that addresses the need for political education at school goes to 83%.

CONCLUSION

The results of surveys carried out in the peripheral areas of the cities of Belém and Macapá, using the Dantas (2016) questionnaire in the peripheral areas of São Paulo, reveal interesting aspects about the position of young people in public school on politics.

It was evident that the central hypothesis of the paper, despite specific differences that can be explained in the light of specific realities, was verified. High school students, in general, and despite the location surveyed here, have similar perceptions of politics. They mix the very common detachment in common sense, and in society in general, with more established beliefs around essential instruments of democracy. They agree that they should participate more, that they need to get closer, but they seem to lack what they agree on: political education must be present in schools, serving as an instrument for approaching politics. The result achieved in this study resembles the hypotheses of Nascimento, Silva and Dantas (2016) who compared results of the questionnaires of political education actions in Suzano, Greater São Paulo, and Araraquara, São Paulo, interior of São Paulo. When the authors point out that interior and capital do not seem so distant from young people's perception of politics, it seems possible to say that quite distant regions – the largest capital of the Southeast, and of the country, and two capitals of the North – neither did they indicate acute distances.

Given these aspects, would it be possible to affirm the need for clearer action regarding the understanding of politics in schools? The country seems divided on this issue. In addition, the theme has deserved attention from an expressively polarized debate, which eventually weakens into radicalism, as Pellanda (2016) warns us.

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