

## Scientific initiation junior program: reflecting to build the future<sup>1 2 3 4</sup>

### *Iniciação científica no ensino médio: refletir para construir o futuro*

### *La iniciación científica en la escuela secundaria: reflexionar para construir el futuro*

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#### Abstract

This article reports an experience in the PIBIC-EM Program, at UNICAMP. It aimed to train young multipliers of public health policies in municipal schools of Limeira. Some characteristics of action research were used as a methodological basis. It was assumed that adolescents are the target of actions, but that they generally do not actively participate in discussions regarding their condition as adolescents. We sought to reflect and build, along with these young people, a different way of thinking and acting as citizens, insofar as we worked along the lines of internalized research, understood here as an everyday attitude to be developed in different ways. The nature of the project allowed us to assist in the construction of a critical thinking, in the structuring of the identity of these young people, in the instrumentalization to identifying problems, and in the performance in their communities of origin. The adolescents were motivated to think, reflect, discuss, build solution strategies, and move from their role as victims to the role of actors and authors of the process.

**Keywords:** Public Policies, Formation, Adolescents, Action research, PIBIC-EM

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## **Resumo**

*Este artigo relata uma experiência no Programa Pibic-EM na Unicamp que teve como objetivo formar jovens multiplicadores das políticas públicas de saúde em escolas do município de Limeira. Utilizou-se como base metodológica algumas características da pesquisa-ação. Partiu-se do pressuposto de que os adolescentes são alvo de ações, mas que geralmente não participam ativamente das discussões que dizem respeito à sua condição de adolescentes. Buscou-se refletir e construir junto com esses jovens uma forma diferenciada de pensar e agir como cidadãos, na medida em que se trabalhou nos moldes da pesquisa internalizada, entendida aqui como atitude cotidiana a ser desenvolvida de diversas maneiras. A natureza do projeto permitiu auxiliar na construção de um pensamento crítico, na própria estruturação da identidade desses jovens, na instrumentalização para a identificação de problemas e na atuação em suas comunidades de origem. Os adolescentes mostraram-se motivados para pensar, refletir, discutir e construir estratégias de solução e sair de seu papel de vítimas para o papel de atores e autores do processo.*

**Palavras-chave:** políticas públicas, formação, adolescentes, pesquisa-ação, Pibic-EM.

## **Resumen**

*Este artículo relata la experiencia en el Programa PIBIC-EM de la UNICAMP. Tuvo como objetivo formar jóvenes multiplicadores de las políticas públicas de la salud en escuelas del municipio de Limeira, San Pablo - Brazil. Se utilizó como base metodológica algunas características de la investigación-acción. Se partió del presupuesto de que los adolescentes son objetivo de acciones, pero generalmente no participan activamente de las discusiones que dicen respecto a su condición de adolescentes. Se buscó reflexionar y construir con los jóvenes una forma diferente de pensar y actuar como ciudadanos, a medida que se trabajó en los moldes de la investigación internalizada, entendida aquí como actitud cotidiana a ser desarrollada de varias maneras. La naturaleza del proyecto permitió auxiliar en la construcción de un pensamiento crítico, la propia estructuración de la identidad de estos jóvenes, en la instrumentalización para la identificación de problemas y en la actuación en sus comunidades de origen. Los adolescentes se mostraron motivados para pensar, reflexionar, discutir y construir estrategias de solución y salir de su papel de víctimas para el papel de actores y autores del proceso.*

**Palabras-clave:** políticas públicas, formación, adolescentes, investigación acción, Pibic-EM.

## **Introduction**

This article aimed to report an experience of integration of research, teaching, and extension activities, with high school adolescents in the city of Limeira, inserted in the context of the Scientific Research Program for Secondary Education (PIBIC-EM) of UNICAMP.

Two projects were conceived for PIBIC-EM in an attempt to sensitize high school youth about their reality, to extract elements that would allow the formation of multipliers of public health policies in their respective schools.

We observed that adolescents are often the target of actions, but do not necessarily take part in the discussions about their condition as adolescents and as a developing Being. Much is said about the risks of their experience, but there are not enough strategies to minimize them. Issues such as education, health, and care emerge and policies unknown to those involved are created. Most of the actions disregard the adolescents' perception and are based on the point of view and reference of adults, who believe they are the only authority to think what is best for young people.

Demo (2005) points out that 'knowing how to think' is the most practical theory that exists, reinforcing that it is not possible to separate thinking from intervening and that thinking socially would be the basis of active citizenship. Knowing how to read the world to deconstruct and intervene, since thinking is not restricted only to the technique, to the method, but to the human ability to take part, to assume oneself as an active subject (FREIRE, 1997). As the adolescents discover knowledge, they are called to become authors and visible subjects. When we know the reality and deconstruct and reconstruct it, we are, above all, interfering and carrying out one of the fundamental horizons of citizenship: knowing how to think to know how to intervene (DEMO, 2005).

Citizenship requires open discussion, careful listening, more arguments and less imposition, consensus, and aims to jointly build and create strong strategies that enable knowledge and the development of more critical and active attitudes based on the development of children and adolescents.

In contemporary society, the main distinction is the separation between the world of adults and children. Childhood appears as a recent concern and is considered, according to Kuczynski (2010), a short stage of life, which comes to an end with the appearance of the first physical changes that emerge at puberty, when the individual is seen as adolescent. According to Ariès (1981), responsibilities and duties legitimize young people as productive members of society, and the social construction of childhood and adolescence admits peculiarities and specificities.

The author points out the signs of childhood, which, in modern societies, support judicial action and public policies to ensure special care needs for children and adolescents, since they experience complex stages of development (SEGUNDO, 2002) that distinguish them from adults and, at the same time, determine a condition of vulnerability.

To think about adolescence in any way is to think about the future of a nation. In the words of Minayo (1999), for the World Health Organization, youth is treated as a “sociocultural process marked by the preparation of individuals to assume the role of an adult in society, at the family and professional level” (p. 13). The consideration of this moment of transition between childhood and adulthood involves several processes, taking place in a complex moment of life, both for the individual and for society.

Defining the age range in which adolescence occurs cannot be the only factor to be considered. Biological, psychological, social, environmental, and cultural factors are of great relevance, since they contribute in different ways to the development and growth of adolescents (CARRETEIRO, 2010; PRATTA, 2008; BRASIL, 2007). One must see adolescence as a singular phenomenon, which receives social and cultural influences, reformulating its social and sexual character, gender relations, ideologies, and even vocational issues (BRASIL, 2007).

It is also necessary to contextualize the world in which young people are inserted to think about the differences between the past and the possibilities that the future holds. The postmodern world, described by Bauman (2008) as being “liquid,” presents several contradictions that need to be considered when considering the human condition, and, in particular, the youth stage. For being modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, everything that is solid falls apart in the air (HARVEY, 2008).

The myth of guaranteed progress has been dissolved and hence the need to recognize the principle of rational uncertainty in the education of the future (MORIN, 2004), to avoid simplifying reductions. If for adults these uncertainties and contradictions are sometimes distressing, for young people they may generate even more fear, especially regarding the future. This diffuse and difficult-to-define fear in 21<sup>st</sup> century society, “liquid fear” in Bauman’s speech (2008), brings different questions to young people, since, moving from a society of producers to one of consumers, we exchange some security for a utopia of control over the social, economic, and natural world, proclaimed by modernity to be able to enjoy more freedom, the freedom to buy, to consume, and to enjoy life. Thus, there are the fears that threaten the body

and property; those that run the durability of the social order, and those that threaten the person's place in the world (BAUMAN, 2001).

In Brazilian society, in which *globalitarianism* is very present, adolescence is associated with crisis, disorder, irresponsibility, configuring a real social problem and strengthening risk factors such as pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases (MARTINS et al., 2006), drugs, violence, among others (BRASIL, 2007).

All of this should lead us to reflect on the meaning of being a teenager, in a more particular than universal way, when taking actions to minimize risk factors and identify protective factors for adolescents, considering them within the social, political, institutional, and personal dimensions (PRATTA, 2008; BRASIL, 2007).

The identification of living conditions, access to information and public policies on health, education, social work, occupation, among others, can help not only expose the problems of adolescents, but also in the review of concepts and practices to intervene. The identified risk situations indicate that, despite the knowledge of the risks, young people have doubts concerning basic prevention issues, showing that the concern with high levels is not enough and must be accompanied by changes in behaviors (KUCZYNSKI, 2010; PRATTA, 2008).

Currently, there is a high rate of consumption of alcohol and other drugs (MARQUES; CRUZ, 2000), increasing the vulnerability of adolescents, in addition to drug trafficking; levels of violence (ABRAMOVAY et al., 2002), both at home and on the street or at school; early death; lack of expectations for the future; among other issues. This scenario reflects a discouraging perspective that requires different actions, which allow the development of skills and competences in young people so that they can face and solve problems in their daily lives. As well as offering spaces where adolescents can discuss, have a voice, and build better ways of life for their best development, considering internal (subjectivity) and social issues (PRATTA, 2008; ASSUMPCÃO JR., 2010).

Education is a determining factor for their positioning in the labor market and their social insertion. Those who are deprived of these rights can become adults unable to act in society in a critical, responsible, and productive way (ASMUS et al., 1996).

Brazil has been very receptive to international standards. One of its great advances is the Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA), created in 1990, regulating article 227 of the 1988 Federal Constitution, which incorporated the principles of the convention on the rights of children and adolescents, bringing an important change in the model of children and adolescent protection, by recognizing adolescents as subjects of law (ARROYO, 2007) and not as the object of intervention by the State, Family, and Society (BRASIL, 2007).

Strengthening young people through knowledge, activities that contribute to improving self-esteem, and developing responsibility for life and its actions will enable a change in their performance as part of society. Therefore, thinking of them as multipliers of actions that allow the development of attitudes, that in some way minimize their condition of risk and vulnerability, is in line with what Demo (2003) brings when discussing education through research, which in fact was carried out with adolescents taking part in the PIBIC-EM experience reported here.

However, training adolescents to multiply public health policies was a choice, because we believe that peer education can be a differential for the knowledge and reflection on these policies. Knowing the policies and reflecting on the rights and duties of a citizen, as well as on their reality, can allow adolescents to more effectively acquire and bring knowledge to their peers, compared to the content worked by adults. We also believed that adolescents who bring knowledge to their peers, regarding the issues that concern them, will also drive changes related to self-esteem, vision of the future, and understanding of their reality.

Thinking about education, as Demo points out (2003), does not presuppose exclusively formal education, the school, because we learn in everyday life, and this is a naturally educational space, since it induces constant learning. Thus, the citizenship that is developed at school is one that knows how to be based on knowledge, first to educate knowledge, and second, to establish with unequivocal competence an ethical, more equitable, and solidary society.

## Participatory methodological process

Using some characteristics of action research as a methodological option was a choice to achieve the objectives of the two research projects carried out with PIBIC-EM. This

methodology is based on a qualitative assessment of social manifestations, committed to the intervention and construction of strategies to face problems in the community (DEMO, 1995). It also allows, according to Toledo; Jacobi (2013), “to stimulate the subjects’ autonomy, by the dialogical construction of knowledge, the development of citizen practices, and the search for solutions to problems in a participatory way” (p.169).

In action research, there is a planned and absolutely necessary action (THIOLLENT, 2000; 1988), conceived and carried out in close association with an action or with the resolution of a collective problem, in which researchers and participants are involved (BRANDÃO, 1999). Due to its practical orientation, it can have multiple applications in different areas (THIOLLENT, 2005).

For Barbier (2007), action research compels researchers to be involved in it, to perceive themselves included in its social structure, affected by the desire and interests of others. In the process, they discover that their own social and emotional life is present and that the unforeseen is also at the center of their practice. Therefore, traditional methodologies must be taken up, developed, and reinvented and, this does not exclude the subject-actors from the research, if they work with others and not on others.

In other words, in action research, active investigation emerges as a space for theoretical and methodological reflection and as a method of political action, which translates into a different way of educating (GAJARDO, 1986) and promoting articulation between theory and practice, as well as the production of new knowledge (EL ANDALOUSSI, 2004).

In turn, the commitment to social transformation cannot be exclusively assumed by the extension area in universities and, thus, teaching and research, considered as its main missions, need to be rethought and restructured (BOTOMÉ, 1996).

According to Thiollent (2000), a lot of power is needed to modify the teaching and research system. However, differentiated actions can be tried, starting from teachers and students interested in integrating educational actions, diagnoses, and other extension work to a line of research. It was precisely in this perspective that actions were developed with young people from PIBIC-EM, where the subjects involved in a specific problem formed a group with common objectives, in which they assumed different roles, including that of researchers (PIMENTA, 2005).

Educating through research was a great challenge, as it was necessary to “build the capacity to (re)build” (DEMO, 2003, p.1), to promote a research process where the student stops being an object of teaching to be a partner of work and also to establish more participatory relationships in which the subjects involved have a common challenge. After all, “without a dream and without utopia, without denunciation and without an announcement, there remains only the technical training to which education is reduced” (FREIRE, 2000, p.57).

The research as “an educational face is not restricted to the accumulation of data, it includes the emancipatory perception of subjects that seek not only to do, but also more opportunities as they are reconstituted by the systematic questioning of reality,” and this is where the pedagogical contact takes place, “when mediated by reconstructive questioning, as a process of construction of the subject, arising from innovative knowledge. Otherwise, it is not distinguished from any other type of contact” (DEMO, 2003, p.7).

Research needs to be internalized as a daily attitude, since it is a reconstructive questioning, which can be carried out in different ways depending on the stage of people’s development. It means knowing how to make and remake oneself permanently. Feeding curiosity, offering experiences that bring meaning, allowing the discovery of new knowledge (ROGERS, 1986).

Finally, understanding that education and research are not reduced to each other, on the contrary, they complement each other in innovative knowledge, in the renewal of theory and practice, and in action, which is based on thinking and the search for critical awareness as a mark of interpretation of reality (FREIRE, 1997; DEMO, 2003). It was precisely in this perspective that the participation of the group of teachers and adolescents from PIBIC-EM was built.

## **Experience with high school adolescents in research**

PIBIC-EM is supported by CNPq and provides opportunities to integrate high school students from public schools in research activities under the guidance of professors or researchers.

The proposal to join efforts in PIBIC-EM was made to seek strategies for joint action in the construction of interdisciplinarity, which is a fundamental principle of the pedagogical project of our campus. The teachers worked with eight students, mostly females, from four public schools in the Limeira region, who were together (from August 2011 to December 2012) in weekly meetings, lasting 2 to 3 hours. It should be noted that, in the first year of the project, we had six (6) female students and two (2) male students, of whom four (4) dropped out at the end of the year, two (2) because they had finished high school and two because their school was not part of the program anymore. These students were replaced by four (4) new students in the second year of the project.

In the first moment (August to December 2011), we presented the contents of the projects, their respective objectives, the methodologies to be used, as well as basic notions about science, scientific research, and systematization of scientific knowledge. Subsequently, a space for listening and discussion was promoted in the group, where the adolescents had the opportunity to share their expectations, needs, and life stories, as well as reflect on their role and ways of acting in the perspective of building a more full citizenship. The time at these meetings was quite long, as it was clear that these young people needed a space for attentive listening, in which they could express their anxieties and joys and also think about the future. Their reports of violence and abuse inside and outside the school gained a huge proportion in the meetings when compared to reports of pleasant situations at school and in family and social life.

One of the students reported

“We live in an insecure place, with drugs, fights and where people end up with their hands tied to react [...] after knowing our realities and realizing that they are not so different, we see our concern with what happens inside our schools and that adults cannot cope with the situation, which gets worse every day”.

In the second moment (February 2012), students were taken to the college library and trained in search and scientific research tools, as well as encouraged to research public policies and various topics, such as adolescence, violence, relationships, drugs, citizenship, rights, among others. The Statute of the Child and Adolescent (ECA) was studied in its entirety, and, through it, the adolescents were able to reflect on their current condition and the rights and duties contained therein, which led to a new movement for them, by thinking about actions that could

be performed in the schools. They selected some sections of the Statute, created posters and placed them in different spaces within the schools, aiming to bring information and raise awareness in the school community.

Due to the interest of the young people in getting to know the reality in schools better from the perspective of the adolescents themselves, the project started the third moment (March to May 2012). With each report, the group would acquire a motivation and at the same time an awareness of the very role they could play as multipliers of what they were discovering. They decided to survey the problems experienced by teenagers in the schools, identifying the location and frequency of events. In their words, their objective would be to “give voice” to the adolescents. In the end, a survey was carried out in the four schools, with teenagers from 10 to 19 years old, who answered two questions: – What are the biggest problems that you, adolescent, face today? (open question); – Where do they occur? (option question: home, street, neighborhood, school, other).

The total number of completed questionnaires was 2,134. They were distributed as follows: at school A, with 1950 students, 741 answered the questionnaire; at school B, with 1121, 417 students answered; at School C, with 473, 380 students answered; and at school D, with 682 at the night shift, 596 students answered.

From the systematization of the survey data, carried out entirely by the young people, it was possible to identify four main problems pointed out by the adolescents: (interpersonal) relationships, citizenship issues, themes related to violence, and concerns about the future. They mentioned situations such as problems in the relationships between them, with parents, teachers, colleagues, boyfriends, friends. Regarding violence, the reports involved complaints of bullying, domestic violence, prejudice, imprisoned parents, drugs, moral and sexual harassment, among others. Concerning the future, they presented concerns related to the first job, vocational guidance, leaving the parents’ house, educational and professional training. In the category of citizenship, the complaints were related to difficulties in accessing health, education, leisure and public transport.

With the data collected, the group discussed several possibilities to act in the schools as multipliers. Then came the fourth moment (June to July 2012) of the project. Several ideas were put forward by the students, such as placing suggestion boxes, banners, posters with phrases alluding to the Statute of the Child and Adolescent, or phrases that allowed the reflection of

young people. They also thought about making a theater with the young people and their parents; however, due to the difficulties raised, this idea did not reach consensus in the group.

Then they thought about making a “mini forum” in the schools, to present parts of some videos and talk to teenagers, to later develop a larger forum. The mini forum was not held due to the lack of support from some schools and the dropout of four students at this stage of the project. With the entry of a new class of four students in the scientific initiation group, they decided to create the 1st Adolescent Forum: “Reflecting on the present to build the future,” which was held at the School of Applied Sciences/FCA-Unicamp, on July 2, 2012. To organize the forum, the number of places was limited to 120 places, that is, 20 people enrolled per school, and 20 free registrations for guests from youth groups who participate in the formation of leaders in the city.

For the promotion of the forum, students created posters that were placed in the schools, as well as registration forms for participation in the event. The support of some principals and the collaboration of some teachers from the schools involved was of fundamental importance for the development of the forum, as well as the direction of the FCA Campus. The students actively participated in all moments of the organization of the forum, such as: planning, logistics, contacts, necessary materials, guests, request for physical space, preparation of snacks, among many others.

They also took part in a mini-training course, promoted by the teachers to enable them to coordinate the workshops that would be offered at the Forum, where it was possible to learn, among other issues, to deal with the diversity of opinions, so as to coordinate the discussions with the young people as group coordinators. In preparation for these workshops, students also had to conduct research on the topics they would coordinate in the Forum’s discussions. To do so, they searched the databases of scientific journals, with the support of a library employee who taught them how to search the databases. Getting in contact with scientific studies allowed them to appropriate the themes, as well as provided an opportunity to clarify the possible doubts that could be raised by the participants during the workshops.

The adolescents organized themselves in pairs and relied on the support from SAE (Student Support Service) and from undergraduate scholarship students, who helped them in logistics and support during the workshops. Several work meetings were held with the undergraduate students until the workshops were prepared, and all the students were able to

experience the diversity of tasks that have to be done to carry out an event. This was an interesting moment, where high school students were able to integrate with undergraduate students at the university and assumed the role of coordinators of the event, a task that they developed with great propriety.

Likewise, it was thought that, if the objective was to offer a listening space for the teenager, we should invite authorities from the municipality of Limeira to hear the results of the work, and thus we invited the authorities from the departments of culture, security, education, health, sport, transportation, guardianship council, military police, CEPROSOM (Municipal Social Promotion Center), and also the principals of the four schools involved in the project. Unfortunately, only three authorities took part in the forum, from the Education department, CEPROSOM, and the training course for leaders in Limeira. The other authorities did not attend, even though they confirmed their presence, nor did they send a representative. Nevertheless, the final report of the forum was sent to all of them.

The forum started at 8 am and the young people identified the subscribers by bracelets that allowed them to be distributed evenly among the workshop groups. At the FCA amphitheater, the Associate Director welcomed them, and the teachers presented PIBIC-EM and the expectations and dynamics of the forum. A breakfast was offered to the participants, who were immediately distributed in four groups, with about 17 teenagers, to start the workshops on the following themes: interpersonal relationships; citizenship; violence; expectations for the future.

To maintain the attention and interest in the discussion in the workshops, the students had to develop strategies and at the same time take care that all the speeches were contemplated and respected, as well as to motivate the most shy teenagers to position themselves and talk about their experience. Another strategy to maintain attention and motivation was to rely on the “laugh medicine” group to relax the groups and bring participants closer. The workshops ended with the preparation of a written material for later discussion in plenary. After finishing the morning’s work, the adolescents took a guided tour of the university premises and had lunch at the university restaurant.

In the afternoon, the results of the workshop discussions were presented in plenary, by two representatives from each group of the four thematic workshops, and then a discussion was held at the large youth group, which was also attended by the invited authorities. The adolescents

were able to express their opinions, discuss them, provide examples, and also listen to the authorities' position. As one student said

“[...] and thus leave inside each participant present a little of what they themselves can do to change what is not right and know how to demand their rights responsibly”.

At the end of the discussion, an interactive lecture was given by the “medicine of laughter” group, and an evaluation of the experience was carried out by the participants. As a matter of fact, the teenagers stayed all day, nobody wanted to leave, and they were very attentive to the observations made by the teachers on each theme. Many comments made by the participants caught our attention, of which we highlight,

“I want to know if the event is going to be repeated, because I want to be warned to participate”; “we learned there are different ways of speaking and that we can be heard, especially among ourselves... to be able to discuss and be able to speak and be respected”.

The adolescent who coordinated the workshops and who took part in the process of developing the project in its different stages stated that

“the forum showed us that it is not easy to fight for our rights, that preparing spaces like this is not enough, we need the interest of the teenagers themselves to change things... we had 100 subscribers and only 70 attended, and only a few were of our own schools”. Likewise, “the difficulty of manifesting oneself and the little interest of adults who make public policies feasible in not being present explains in some way the participation of adolescents in the construction and viability of public policies”. And still: “the project taught us how important teamwork is, we learned how to build and how to plan, we left with a big difference and we will certainly be different citizens”.

After the forum, the project had a fifth moment (August to December 2012), which consisted of preparing and forwarding reports to the general organization of PIBIC-EM/CNPq. In this activity, it was possible, in addition to providing learning about writing scientific reports, to make a general evaluation of the experience. The project teenagers also took part in two scientific events, promoting their experience in poster form.

After the project activities ended, an evaluation was made with the adolescents regarding their experience at PIBIC-EM. Through some testimonials, we can exemplify the unique effects of the participation in the process of building and developing the project: “

“[...] I was shy and now I’m not afraid to express my ideas in public”;

“being part of this project changed my way of seeing things; being able to look at problems with a more critical eye, always thinking of some way to solve them, helped me to be more participative at school, defending my point of view, encouraged me to ask more questions, always looking for concrete and scientific answers, and as a citizen helped me to fight for my rights”;

“throughout the development of the project, I was able to learn several things, which, until then, I had no knowledge of. Like, for example, analyzing and systematizing data, carrying out scientific research, knowing and understanding ECA, organizing and coordinating a Forum, among many other things, which made me grow a lot during the development of the project, not only academically, but also as a person”;

“it was essential for me to be able to better develop my ability to work in groups, be responsible with deadlines, and research a lot”;

“the project was a fundamental part of my personal and academic growth during the second year of high school, providing me with knowledge that I would not obtain only at school”;

“it showed me the importance of public policies in people’s lives”;

“I learned to lead, to listen, and, most importantly, to multiply the knowledge about Public Policies”.

Likewise, for us, as mentors, participating in this project was very important and challenging, since it allowed us to experience the problems that currently afflict teenagers. Many of them were expressed in such a dramatic way that they marked us deeply and moved us to help these young people in the construction of each stage of the project.

## Final considerations

PIBIC-EM, conducted through some characteristics of the action research methodology, allowed us to integrate the research activities with teaching and extension, and

thus promote more accurate diagnoses and transformations in the youth community by their own actions.

It was also possible to favor the integration of high school students with undergraduate and graduate students working with research on related topics, as well as promoting the dissemination of undergraduate courses at the university and, in particular, of our school, located in the city where the students participating in the project live in.

By providing the everyday experience on campus, from the activities of PIBIC-EM, students were able to learn about the opportunities that the university offers to the community, as well as to awaken their interest in university life and its inclusion in the construction of their life projects.

Projects of this nature, which are based on the assumptions of action research, can assist in the construction of critical thinking for young people and in the structuring of their own identity, as well as in the instrumentalization capable of generating diagnoses and possibilities of differentiated action in their schools and communities of origin.

Educating through research motivated students to think, reflect, discuss, build concepts and solution strategies, and appropriate the space that was offered to them. It also allowed them to move from the role of victims and initial apathy to the role of actors and authors, regarding the project that instigated them to bring their reality and analyze it as a group. In this process, some gave up, perhaps because they expected tasks already prescribed in advance to solve problems, such as, among others, awareness lectures for young people.

We emphasize, in this experience, that the chosen methodological approach demands a slow process of collective construction, which required a lot of dedication and time, in addition to an attentive and careful listening concerning the demands brought by the adolescents. We also had to learn how to deal with our anxieties caused by the reports about the lives of these adolescents, in the role women, mothers, and researchers.

From our perspective, it was possible to observe the transformation of these adolescents at each meeting, in learning and in experiences beyond “scientific knowledge”. We have seen changes in behavior, increased self-esteem, appropriation of the process and the project, self-reflection on their realities, changes in how they see themselves and others, as well as their educational institutions.

Perceiving them with new attitudes, with more hope, in the expectation of a better world of which they are also part and can help to build, as they learn to put themselves, to open themselves to the opinion of the other, and in a certain way to grow, makes us believe that this experience was largely significant.

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