

**Appropriation and uses of the Antonio Gramsci's thought on
Education in academic works^{1 2 3 4}**

***Apropriação e usos do pensamento de Antonio Gramsci sobre
Educação em trabalhos acadêmicos***

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Abstract:

In this article we analyze the appropriation and uses of Antonio Gramsci's thought about education, aiming to apprehend how graduate students have interpreted the author's thought and its relevance to understand contemporary education. It is a documentary and bibliographical research, analyzing nine theses and dissertations out of 32 works that indicated Gramsci as theoretical reference in their abstracts. The thirty-two papers were collected from a data bank with 1,283 theses and dissertations on educational policy, produced in post-graduation programs in Education from 2000 to 2010, which had scored five, six, and seven in the three-year evaluation, finished in 2010, from the Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Ensino Superior (Capes). We conclude that Gramscian ideas about school and education were important references for the authors to analyze educational policies and school under a critical perspective, establishing the relevance of the author's educational reflections. Furthermore, we posit that Gramscian thought has fostered a broader and deeper reflection on education, in articulation with the material and cultural forms of production in a class-divided society with strong social inequality.

Keywords: Antonio Gramsci, education, unitary school, work as educational principle, academic production

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Resumo:

Neste artigo analisamos a apropriação e os usos do pensamento de Antonio Gramsci sobre Educação, com o objetivo de apreender como pós-graduandos têm interpretado o pensamento do autor e sua atualidade para compreender a educação contemporânea. Trata-se de pesquisa documental e bibliográfica, com análise de nove teses e dissertações, de um conjunto de 32 trabalhos que indicaram Gramsci como referencial teórico no resumo. Os 32 trabalhos foram coletados de um banco de dados com 1.283 teses e dissertações sobre política educacional, produzidas em programas de pós-graduação em Educação no período de 2000 a 2010, que tiveram notas cinco, seis e sete na avaliação trienal da Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Ensino Superior (Capes), encerrada em 2010. Concluímos que as ideias gramscianas sobre escola e educação foram referenciais importantes para os autores das teses e dissertações analisarem as políticas educacionais e a escola numa perspectiva crítica, demarcando a atualidade das reflexões educacionais do autor. Também apontamos que o pensamento gramsciano tem alimentado uma reflexão mais ampla e aprofundada da Educação, em articulação à forma de produção material e cultural numa sociedade dividida em classes e com marcante desigualdade social.

Palavras-chave: *Antonio Gramsci, educação, escola unitária, trabalho como princípio educativo, produção acadêmica*

Introduction

Italian thinker Antonio Gramsci has written on various topics - especially during the prison period⁵ - including education and school. His writings have been studied in the academy, political organizations, and social movements, especially left-wing ones, since the first half of the twentieth century. However, it was mainly in the 1970s and 1980s, when part of the prison writings was published in Brazil, that his ideas were more strongly disseminated and entered the academic field, especially in the area of Education.

According to Secco (2002), the publication of Gramsci texts from 1975 onwards is significantly higher than during the period from 1920 to the 1960s, when appeared the first references to his writings. In the area of Education, according to a study by Gomes (2017), we

⁵ Antonio Gramsci was arrested by the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini in 1926 and released only in 1937, shortly before his death. During this period, he wrote 33 notebooks, known as The Prison Notebooks.

also find an increase in publications on Gramscian thought, or using its concepts, from the 1980s.

More recently, a “new generation of researchers” who study the author's thinking or use Gramscian concepts and ideas to analyze education in Brazil and other themes has been favored by closer relations with Italian intellectuals developing philological studies of Gramsci's writings and the creation of the International Gramsci Society of Brazil (IGS / Brazil), an institution that aims to disseminate Gramsci's life, work, and thought in the country, in intellectual, cultural, political, and social spheres, and to foster debate on his work, in addition to broadening and deepening the analysis of diverse themes through a Gramscian perspective, in its different interpretations⁶.

In a sense, it can be said that we are experiencing a new moment of study on Gramsci's work and the use of Gramscian concepts to interpret the Brazilian reality, with the fertilization of innovative analytical perspectives, including the publication of the Brazilian version of the critical edition. Italian⁷, shared among us.

Among Gramsci scholars there are different interpretations of his ideas. According to Dias (1996), “Gramscian words are meridianally clear” (p. 112), so the often-used uses and abuses of Gramsci's writings can be attributed to the instrumentalization of the author's thinking as an effect of political maneuver.

Accordingly, we adopted as a method the analysis of the historical production context of Gramscian work, the author's practices as a revolutionary militant, and the understanding of each concept as part of a whole, based on the reading of the new Brazilian edition of *Cadernos* and *Cartas do Cárcere* (in English: The Prison Notebooks) and comparing it with the Italian critical edition (Gramsci, 2002, 2007, 2011a, 2011b, 2012, 2013, 2014). Thus, by understanding that there is unity in the author's thinking, we seek to analyze the concepts and ideas about education used in theses and dissertations in relation to Gramsci's writings as a whole.

The larger research aimed to know the appropriations and uses of Gramsci's thought in theses and dissertations on educational policies, produced from 2000 to 2010, in postgraduate

⁶ As reported on the IGS / Brazil website, retrieved from <http://igsbrasil.org/#>.

⁷ This is the six-volume edition published by the publishing house *Civilização Brasileira* between 1999 and 2002, organized by Carlos Nelson Coutinho, with the collaboration of Marco Aurélio Nogueira and Luiz Sérgio Henriques.

programs in Education with a grade equal to or above five in the three-year evaluation by the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes). The database consists of 1,283⁸ theses and dissertations dealing with educational policies. According to two organizers of the base, the program selection criteria are explained for two reasons:

- 1) The impossibility of the research group to analyze the production of all postgraduate programs in the country during that period; 2) the understanding that, in this selection, are the programs best evaluated by Capes. This, a priori, does not constitute an analysis on the merit of productions, but is a starting point and opens perspectives for the development of future studies (Silva & Jacomini, 2016, p. 21).

The research has a documentary and bibliographic character (Lüdke & André, 1986). The main documents studied were 32 theses and dissertations that indicated Antonio Gramsci's thought as a theoretical reference in the abstract, selected from the 1,283 works from the beforementioned database. After reading through the 32 papers, we found that Gramscian ideas and concepts related to education had been used centrally by nine authors. In this article, we present the analyzes of appropriations and uses of Gramscian concepts and ideas about education and school in the construction of research and in the analysis of postgraduate study objects in these nine theses and dissertations.

The Gramscian concepts and ideas used by the authors of the monographs were: unitary school, work as an educational principle, social mark of school, and school dualism. In some works, the concepts of ideology, intellectual, state, and hegemony articulated to the educational discussion were also present.

In addition to direct references to Gramsci's writings, the master's and doctoral students sought support from four interpreters, Paolo Nosella, Mario Manacorda, Antonio Tavares de Jesus, and Jose Willington Germano.

First we discuss Gramsci's ideas and concepts about education in the Prison Notebooks, then present a synthesis of the interpretations and uses of Gramscian ideas and concepts in the nine works, and finally discuss the appropriations and uses of the author's thoughts focusing on his own potential for reflections on education and educational policies nowadays.

⁸ The research database is available at: <http://www.cede.uefs.br/files/File/prodacadempoliticaseducacional.pdf>.

Unitary school, work as an educational principle, social mark of school, and school duality in *Prison Notebooks*

The issues related to school and education in Gramscian writings are mainly found in the Special Notebook No. 12, but we find, throughout his work, references to education as a fundamental element in the process of building cultural and political hegemony. For Gramsci, education is an important task for the state, the political parties, and the different institutions of civil society that ideologically and politically dispute the forms of organization and the direction of society. Therefore, he assigns to the state the task of educating and forming the collective man, in a constant movement of “creating new and higher types of civilization” (Gramsci, 2012, p. 23, Q 13, § 7⁹).

In the analysis of Italian Resurgence, Gramsci discusses the action of moderates (Moderate Party) “to introduce the pedagogical principle of reciprocal teaching” (Gramsci, 2011b, p. 98, Q. 19, § 27), in a concrete movement against the Jesuit school, and highlights the importance of school educational activity in the formation of intellectuals of all levels and, consequently, in the construction of hegemony.

He considers that education, not just school education, plays a key role in the intellectual and moral reform of society. Thus, in analyzing how folklore should be discussed and taught, he highlights the importance of broadening and deepening research so that it can be understood in the sense of a disaggregated world conception rather than as a bizarre one. He believed that this would make teaching more efficient and could effectively determine “the birth of a new culture among the great masses”, which would lead to the disappearance of the separation between “modern culture and popular culture or folklore” (Gramsci, 2002, p. 136, Q. 27, § 1).

Thus, education in Gramsci's writings has a broad sense of activity fundamental to the construction of hegemony that takes place in different public and private instances of society. In this context, it is the basis of societal conformation as a whole to the dominant ideology, being a primordial activity for the subordinate classes to develop class consciousness and to create a conception of the world that guides the fight against exploitation and oppression.

⁹ Translator's note: all quotations from Gramsci works were translated from the Brazilian editions of his works. Q and § indicate the notebook (Quaderno in Italian) and paragraph of Prison Notebooks.

Therefore, understanding Gramsci's educational reflections requires understanding the concept of hegemony, both in relation to the role school plays in shaping and maintaining the dominant hegemony in capitalist societies, and in relation to the construction of a new hegemony aiming the transformation of society.

Gramsci elaborates the unitary school proposal on the assumption that the crisis school was going through at his time was linked to the complexity of modern societies, which led to the need to create a school to form its own leaders and specialists. In parallel with the more traditional “humanist” school, whose aim was to develop in each individual a general cultural background, schools were created for professional branches or even already specialized professions.

It can be said, moreover, that the school crisis that is spreading today is precisely linked to the fact that this process of differentiation and particularization takes place in a chaotic manner, without clear and precise principles, without a well-structured and consciously established plan: the crisis of the school program and organization, that is, the general orientation of a policy of training the modern intellectual framework, is largely an aspect and a complexification of the broader and more general organic crisis (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 33, Q. 12, § 1).

The Sardinian author understands that the need to produce new intellectual frameworks in a context of particularization and specification of professional branches, or even of a profession, led to a rational division between classical school and vocational school, in a context where “the vocational school was intended to the instrumental classes [workers], while the classical one was aimed towards the ruling classes and intellectuals”(Gramsci, 2011a, p. 33, Q. 12, § 1). Gramsci is a contemporary of Taylorism/Fordism which, although with a stronger presence in the United States, has, to some extent, inspired changes in the industrial production in Europe. He considered that “the development of the industrial base, both in the city and in the countryside, generated the growing need for a new type of urban intellectual”, which led to the development of the “technical school (professional but not manual)” alongside “the classical school”. And put in “discussion the very principle of the concrete orientation of general culture, of the humanist orientation of general culture founded on the Greco-Roman tradition” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 33, Q. 12, § 1).

Thus, in that context, the division between classical and vocational schools sought to respond the demands of industrial development, establishing, since school, students'

professional future, and thus reinforcing societal class division. It sought to train in the technical school the intellectual / professional that the industry required.

The organization of the technical school brought into discussion the cultural humanist orientation of the classical school and developed a new school program that would respond more efficiently to the preparation of the future professional, abdicating the general humanistic formation.

The current tendency is to abolish any kind of “disinterested” (not immediately interested) and “formative” school, or to retain only a small copy for a small elite of gentlemen and women who should not think of preparing themselves. for a professional future, as well as to spread more and more the specialized vocational schools, in which the student's destiny and future activity are predetermined (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 33, Q. 12, § 1).

Gramsci's proposal to solve the crisis is the unitary school, which refers to an initial school of general humanistic cultural formation, with the development of manual and intellectual working capacity. Vocational or specialized training would follow this general training.

The crisis will have a solution that rationally should follow this line: an initial single school of general, humanistic, formative culture that fairly balances the development of the ability to work manually (technically, industrially) and the development of intellectual work skills. From this type of single school, through repeated career guidance experiences, they will move to a specialized school or to productive work (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 33-34, Q. 12, § 1).

Instead of a unitary school, what Italy experienced in the 1920s was the Gentile Reform¹⁰, which deepened school duality as, after the eight years of elementary education, which began in pre-school, there was the popular *Corsi Integrativi di Avviamento Professionale* for those who would become workers or rural workers (Horta, 2008). The 1923 High School Reform maintained the horizontal division between classical, technical, and normal instruction, and the vertical, which divided each of these modalities into first and second grades. The eight-year classical education, five in the *gymnasium* and three in the *liceo*, was intended to prepare for higher education, university or higher institute; the eight-year technical education, with four years of undergraduate and four years of higher education at the Technical Institute, was intended to prepare for some professions; and the normal seven-year education, four-year in the lower

¹⁰ Giovanni Gentile (1875-1944), Italian philosopher and Minister of Public Instruction of the Kingdom of Italy from 1922 to 1925, under Benito Mussolini's rule.

courses and three-year undergraduate course at the *Magistrale Institute*, aimed to prepare the primary school teacher (Horta, 2008).

Thus, when analyzing the school of his time comparing it to the traditional school, Gramsci disputes the idea that an effective school democratization had been accomplished. For him, a school that has as its main function to prepare for immediate practical interests (professionalization) to the detriment of more general humanist and cultural formation, perpetuating social differences is not democratic.

In today's school, due to the profound crisis of cultural tradition and the conception of life and man, there is a process of progressive degeneration: professional-type schools, that is, concerned with satisfying immediate practical interests, predominate over the formative school, immediately disinterested. The most paradoxical aspect is that this new type of school appears to be and is praised as democratic, when in reality it is not only intended to perpetuate social differences, but also to crystallize them into Chinese forms (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 49, Q. 12, § 2).

Thus, in Italy, in the 1920s, school duality was maintained, with types of formal education differentiated according to social class, as indicated in the Gramscian analysis between church and state and the formation of caste and secular intellectuals.

The elementary and middle school is the popular and petty bourgeois school, social strata that are educationally monopolized by caste, as most of its individuals do not reach university, that is, they will not know modern education in its critical higher phase, but will know only dogmatic education. The university is the school of the ruling class (and its personnel) itself, it is the mechanism through which the selection of individuals from other classes that will be incorporated into the governing, administrative, and governing personnel (Gramsci, 2007, p. 45, Q. 16, p. 11).

Against the duality of school, Gramscian unitary school perspective would give all students the opportunity, without distinction, to develop their potentialities and, from them, to make their choice to continue their studies in vocational training institutes or universities. To achieve this goal, the unitary school should be public and ensure the conditions for everyone to attend it, which involved both material conditions such as no child labor, access to didactic/pedagogical materials, etc., a school program (curriculum, time, space, pedagogical practices) that favored the development of students from lower classes who, due to social conditions, had less intimacy with school programs and culture.

It is in this perspective that the unitary school is an important part of the construction of a new hegemony within the framework of capitalist society and the struggle for a socialist

society. It means a proposal to overcome the so-called school crisis in the framework of capitalism and the germ for the construction of new forms of sociability and formation in a regulated society, in which it can fully develop. For Gramsci, unitary school implied new relationships between manual and intellectual labor in all social life, not just in school.

The advent of unitary school means the beginning of new relationships between intellectual work and industrial work not only in school, but in all social life. The unitary principle therefore will be reflected in all organisms of culture, transforming them and lending them new content (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 40, Q. 12, § 1).

He argued that in order to form men capable of directing and being directed, the unitary school must overcome its solely legal-formal preparation, a characteristic of technical school, and integrate into it a general formation that would provide the political cultural elements for everyone to be in a position of leadership.

The manager must have that minimum of general culture that allows him, if not autonomously "create" the fair solution, at least know how to judge between the solutions designed by the experts and, consequently, choose the one that is fair from the "synthetic" point of view. "Of political technique (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 35, Q. 12, § 1).

Humanistic formation in the unitary school has a broader character of general culture appropriation than traditional school. Thus, the last phase of the unitary school should

be conceived and organized as a decisive phase in which it tends to create the fundamental values of "humanism", the intellectual self-discipline and moral autonomy necessary for further specialization, be it of a scientific character (university studies) or of an immediately practical nature. (industry, bureaucracy, trade, etc.) (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 39, Q. 12, § 1).

Dialoguing with the school conditions of his time, Gramsci presented a set of proposals about the organization of the school (curriculum, age range for the unitary school, numerical teacher/student ratio, full-time/boarding school, public funding), or that is, fundamental questions to give materiality to their conception of school, because "to instruct and to educate oneself is necessary an apparatus of culture through which the old generation transmits to the new generation all the experience of the past" (Gramsci, 2007, p. 129, Q. 14, § 69).

Although the author considers that a unitary school is also an active school, he warns of the need to distinguish between active and creative schools, considering the unitary school a creative one, understood as a school that develops with students research methods and

knowledge, not a predetermined program. That is, a school that leads students to certain discipline habits that contribute to learning and personality development in a spontaneous and autonomous effort (Broccoli, 1979).

For Gramsci, it is important for the school to guide students about the fact that “learning occurs primarily through a spontaneous and autonomous student effort, in which the teacher performs only a friendly guiding role, as it is or should be in the university” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 40, Q. 12, § 1). This is the fundamental role of the school, how it favors the construction of intellectual autonomy.

Discovering for yourself a truth, without suggestions and outside help, is creation, even if the truth is old, and demonstrates the possession of the method; it indicates that, in any case, one has entered the stage of intellectual maturity in which new truths can be discovered. Therefore, at this stage, the fundamental school activity will be developed in seminars, libraries, experimental laboratories; This is where the organic guidelines for vocational guidance are collected (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 40, Q. 12, § 1).

Still on the unitary school, Gramsci explains that it should not be confused with the introduction of manual / practical work in the organization of a traditional school, as was the case with the “Oundle Public School, one of the oldest English schools”. In the “unitary school, work and theory are closely linked,” as it is its role to educate “the instrumental and subordinate classes for a leading role in society as a whole and not as singular individuals” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 174- 175, Q. 9, § 119).

Gramsci (2011a) concludes the first paragraph of Notebook 12 by reiterating that the organization of cultural work, according to the principles of the unitary school, can serve as a guide for the development of centers of culture that would be a molecule of a broader structure. That is, this way of thinking formation, integrating manual and intellectual activities, should be the principle for the humanistic formation of general culture in all spaces of society.

In the second paragraph of this book, he devotes himself to an investigation of the educational principle and conducts a critical analysis of Gentile's educational reform (Gramsci, 2011a). As an institution that contributes to the shaping of ways of thinking and conceiving the world, he highlights the role of the school in the construction of a unitary world conception that helps to overcome fragmentary conceptions based on folklore, religion, and common sense. For this, the unitary school should consider work as an educational principle.

Therefore, it can be said that the educational principle on which primary schools were based was the concept of labor, which cannot be accomplished in all its power of expansion and productivity without an accurate and realistic knowledge of natural laws and without a legal order that organically regulates the lives of men among themselves, an order that must be respected by spontaneous conviction and not only by external imposition, by recognized necessity and proposed to itself as freedom and not by mere coercion (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 43, Q. 12, § 2).

Work is understood here in its ontological and anthropological sense, it is work as a human activity directed to a purpose as in Marx (1999), therefore, as an abstract concept and concrete experience.

Work, as creator of use-values, as useful work, is indispensable to the existence of man - whatever the forms of society -, it is a natural and eternal need to effect the material exchange between man and nature and, therefore, to maintain human life (Marx, 1999, p. 64-65).

In discussing the educational process of his time, Gramsci (2011a, Q. 12, § 2) criticizes the fact that there is no “unity between school and life and, therefore, there is no unity between education and instruction” (p. 44). However, he warns that the separation between instruction and education was a mistake of the idealistic pedagogy, because it is not possible to completely separate them, as the student is subject of the educational process.

For instruction not to be the same as education, it would be necessary for the student to be mere ‘passivity’, a “mechanical container” of abstract notions, which is absurd, besides being “abstractly” denied by the defenders of pure ‘educativeness’, precisely against mere mechanistic instruction. (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 44, Q. 12, § 2).

For the author, the instruction-education nexus occurs as the teacher, aware of the cultural differences present in society and between children and adults, organizes a teaching process and guides students so that they can reflect on popular and scientific knowledge and appropriate themselves of those which allow the creation of a unitary conception of the world.

If the faculty is deficient and the instruction-education nexus is abandoned, in order to solve the issue of teaching according to abstract schemes in which education is exalted, the teacher's work will become even more deficient: a rhetorical school will be found, without seriousness, as it will lack the material corporality of what is right, what is true will be only verbally true, ie theoretically (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 44, Q. 12, § 2).

In analyzing the Gentile Reform, Gramsci (2011a, Q. 12, § 2) states that it will be of no use to change programs and disciplinary organization if the school crisis is not understood as

an expression of the crisis of traditional way of intellectual and moral life that separates school from life. He notes that “the new programs, the more they affirm and theorize about the student's activity and his diligent collaboration with teacher's work, the more they are designed as if the student were mere passivity” (p. 45), and contribute nothing to overcome the crisis. Work as an educational principle is precisely supposed to guarantee the unity between school and life. “Thus, we return to the student's really active participation in school, which can only exist if the school is linked to life” (p. 45).

Another false contrast analyzed by Gramsci is between content school and formative school. Since formation does not occur in a vacuum, school demands content that, presented to students in a formative perspective, constitutes the foundation of more general cultural humanism, that is, the school not interested or not immediately interested.

Thus, the changes to solve the school crisis were more complex than they seemed, not just programmatic changes, but a whole social complex.

The fight against the old school was fair, but reform was not as simple as it seemed; these was not about programmatic schemes, but about men, and not only men who are teachers, but the whole social complex of which men are expressions. In fact, a mediocre teacher may get students to become more educated, but he will not be able to become more educated; he will scrupulously and bureaucratically develop the mechanical part of the school, and the student, if he is an active brain, will organize on his own, and with the help of the social environment, the accumulated “baggage” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 44-45, Q. 12, § 2).

In this quote, the role of the teacher in the educational process is highlighted, but also that of the student, who, despite the teacher, can learn on his own, given his immersion in the social context. Gramsci (2011a, Q. 12, § 2) warns, however, that in the face of new programs, and the “general decrease in faculty level, there simply will be no more 'baggage' to organize” (p. 45). It refers to the “baggage” that the student himself could organize, which is in a cultural environment rich of systematized knowledge and experiences. However, this does not minimize the responsibility of the school and teacher in the educational process.

For the author, the foundation and organization of the school in a given society is conditioned to the conscience of the whole nation, of which the teachers are expression, “however small, and certainly not vanguard” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 43, Q. 12, § 2).

Still as part of the critical analysis of the Gentile Reform, Gramsci (2011a, Q. 12, § 2) states that “the new programs should have completely abolished examinations” (p. 45), as they

seemed more a game of chance than a moment in which students' degree of knowledge could be systematically verified. With the reform of the Italian school in the 1920s, Gramsci seemed to glimpse a school that was getting empty in content and filling this void with a strong attachment to exams.

He considered that the Gentile Reform had made changes in school regarding the instruction and learning of concrete notions that were detrimental to student education. He expressed concern about what he called the loosening of study discipline and stated that study is also work, in fact very tiring, that requires effort.

It is a process of adaptation, it is a habit acquired with effort, boredom, and even suffering. The participation of the broader masses in middle school brings with it the tendency to loosen the discipline of study, to provoke “facilities”. Many think that the difficulties are artificial, as they are accustomed to only considering manual labor as work and fatigue (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 51-52, Q. 12, § 2).

Gramsci needed to address these issues and resist the tendency to facilitate studies as they demanded effort and interest, without which the teaching and learning process would be denatured. For “if you want a new layer of intellectuals, reaching the highest specializations, from a social group that has not traditionally developed the right skills, you will have to overcome enormous difficulties” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 52, Q. 12, § 2).

This education conception, which Gramsci develops more systematically in the Prison Notebooks, can be found as a reflection on the upbringing of his sons Delio and Giuliano and niece Mea, in the letters he exchanged during his prison years with his wife, who lived in the then Soviet Union, and with his Sardinian family. At the base of his conception of education is the idea that “life is a struggle to adapt to the environment but also, and especially, to master it and not be overwhelmed by it”¹¹ (Gramsci, 2005, p. 439).

A very common issue in the letters concerns spontaneity in the education of children. As seen, Gramsci considers it necessary for the adult to guide and direct the educational process, which implies, to some extent, a kind of coercion, based on the “authority that comes from affection and coexistence” (Gramsci, 2005, p. 439)¹².

¹¹ Letter of August 25, 1930, addressed to his brother Carlo.

¹² Letter of August 25, 1930, addressed to his brother Carlo.

In a letter of July 14, 1930 to his wife Giulia, in which he discusses the upbringing of his children, he believes that “with children, until their personality reaches a certain degree of development, a little pedantry is necessary and indispensable” (Gramsci, 2005, p. 432), and warns that, usually, this guidance, that should occur before adolescence, is often practiced between 12 and 16 years, when it is harmful and can no longer have the guiding effect it would have in childhood.¹³

In another letter of December 30, 1929, Gramsci writes that Giulia's and her family's conception of education seemed to be “excessively metaphysical,” meaning that they assumed that children are men in potential and that the role of education is to help the child develop something that is latent. He, on the contrary, thought “that man is a whole historical formation obtained through coercion (understood not only in the brutal sense and external violence)” (Gramsci, 2005, p. 386).

Thus, in correspondence with the family, Gramsci delineates a conception of education in which the adult fulfills the important role of ensuring the systematicity and organicity of the educational process. In this sense, he opposes the pedagogical proposals that claim total freedom and autonomy of the child, in an idolatry to spontaneity. This does not mean, however, as we saw in the Notebooks, that he was not aware of the authoritarianism and formalism that often prevailed in educational activity, nor that he did not criticize them.

In analyzing what he called the social mark of school, that is, the existence of different types of schools, designed for the public according to their social conditions, Gramsci pointed out that the traditional school was “oligarchic”, not because of its teaching, but because it was intended to form the ruling classes and to not be accessible to subordinate classes. For him, the social mark of school was given by the fact that the type of education intended for the formation of leaders is not available to everyone. “The social mark is given by the fact that each social group has its own type of school, designed to perpetuate in these strata a particular traditional, leading or instrumental function” (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 49, Q. 12, § 2).

To overcome this school condition, in the context analyzed by Gramsci, he elaborated the proposal of single or unitary school.

¹³ See letter to his brother Carlo, August 25, 1930.

Therefore, if this web is to be destroyed, one must not multiply and hierarchize the types of vocational school, but create a unique kind of preparatory (primary-middle) school which leads young people to the thresholds of vocational choice, forming, during this time, a person capable of thinking, studying, driving, or controlling who drives (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 49, Q. 12, § 2).

A key aspect of Gramsci's analysis of school on his time compared to the traditional school was his opposition to the different types of school that served different social classes reproducing social differences. The school destined for the subordinate classes, due to its characteristic of technical formation, did not offer a humanistic formation of general culture, a base to direct and construct of a new hegemony around the interests of the subordinate classes. Therefore, it considered that the multiplication of technical schools, with curriculum aimed at preparing for the exercise of a profession of a technical character, detached from a content of general cultural formation, as was happening in Italy in the 1920s, maintained precisely what was criticized in the traditional school. "The multiplication of types of vocational school therefore tends to perpetuate traditional differences; but since it tends to create internal stratifications in these differences, it gives rise to the impression of a democratic tendency" (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 49, Q. 12, § 2).

For Gramsci (2011a), it is not enough for the school to prepare a skilled worker, it is necessary to give them the means to become a "ruler", even if abstractly in general conditions to be able to do so, because "political democracy tends to make rulers and ruled coincide (in the sense of governing with the consent of the ruled), ensuring that each ruled free learning of the skills and general technical preparation necessary for that purpose" (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 50, Q. 12, § 2).

But in his analysis, the school that structured in 1920s Italy, the one for subordinates, did not even give rise to the possibility of expanding the kind of education that technically formed the leaders.

But the kind of school that develops as a school for the people no longer tends to even retain the illusion, as it is increasingly organized to constrain the base of the technically prepared ruling layer, in a still socially constraining political environment, more "private initiative", in the sense of providing this capacity and technical-political preparation, so that, in reality, we return the divisions into "orders", legally fixed and crystallized instead of overcoming group divisions. The multiplication of vocational schools, increasingly specialized since the beginning of the school curriculum, is one of the most obvious manifestations of this trend (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 50, Q. 12, § 2).

For Gramsci, early and untied technical and vocational training from the formation of general culture removed from popular classes the possibilities of an education that offered the development of leadership skills, so fundamental to the organization of subordinates and the construction of a new hegemony. Therefore, this type of school, as opposed to democratizing education, tends to maintain school stratification and imprints a social mark on school, thus opposing the proposal of a unitary primary and middle school.

Thus, work as an educational principle, the unity between theory and practice, manual and intellectual work that should guide the school's curricular organization, broadly understood, is connected to the intellectual conception of the author. For Gramsci, there is no human activity without intellectual intervention, *homo faber* cannot be separated from *homo sapiens*, and it is in this sense that all men are intellectuals. However, it is important to consider that there are different degrees in the relationship between cerebral intellectual elaboration effort and muscle-nervous effort; Therefore, there are activities in which the effort of intellectual elaboration is greater than the muscular-nervous effort and vice versa.

Thus, for the construction of a new layer of intellectuals, unlike the traditional ones, represented by the literate, philosophers, artist, it would be necessary a new balance between muscular and intellectual activities.

The problem of creating a new intellectual layer, therefore, is to critically elaborate the intellectual activity that each one has, in a certain degree of development, changing its relation with the muscular-nervous effort, towards a new balance and making muscle-nervous effort itself an element of a general practical activity that perpetually innovates the physical and social world, becoming the foundation of a new and integral conception of the world (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 53, Q. 12, § 3).

We can see that Gramsci's concern, regarding the formation of the new man, is precisely on how to unite the specialization (technical/professional knowledge) with the political formation (humanist/cultural knowledge) giving him the ability to be a leader.

The new intellectual's way of being can no longer consist in the eloquence, outward and momentary engine of affections and passions, but in an active insertion into practical life as a builder, organizer, “permanent persuader”, not only a pure speaker - but superior to the abstract mathematical spirit; from technical-work, one reaches technical-science and the historical humanist conception, without which it remains an “expert” and does not become a “leader” (expert + politician) (Gramsci, 2011a, p. 53, Q. 12, § 3).

It is about building a society in which everyone is capable of directing, regardless of whether or not they play this role, at the different levels of direction that they can perform. The key to Gramsci is that each individual develops this knowledge and ability, with school, at all levels, an important space for that.

The Gramscian theme of education in academic work on educational policy¹⁴

The authors who worked on the theme of education in Gramsci highlighted the author's unitary school proposal, underlining the importance of a humanist formation, of general culture, articulated with the necessary technical knowledge for productive work. Thus, the unitary school would mean new relationships between intellectual and manual work not only in the school institution but also in society.

In discussing teacher's role in student education, the graduate students/authors stressed that, in the Gramscian perspective, the teacher should provide students with genuine sources of culture, given the importance to allow lower classes to appropriate themselves of the knowledge built by humanity, a key element in the formation of a conception world different from that of the ruling class. From this perspective, Gramsci's critique of the traditional school and his careful and critical appreciation of the new school were presented. For Gramsci, the unitary school should overcome some spontaneity of the active school and the mere activism of the vocational school with a formation based on maturity and intellectual and moral autonomy and freedom for professional choice.

The authors stressed that the unitary school proposal breaks the dichotomy of a classical education to the children from the ruling classes and an instrumental one to the workers'

¹⁴ To keep the anonymity of the authors of the analyzed theses and dissertations, we decided not to indicate each use or appropriation of Gramsci's thought to the respective author, but to present and analyze the different ways Gramsci's thought has been understood by the author/graduate students in the field of education. The references of theses and dissertations are at the end of the text. Readers interested in knowing which postgraduate students have used certain concepts can consult the postdoctoral report entitled 'Appropriations and Uses of Antonio Gramsci's Theoretical Contributions in Educational Policy Research (2000-2010)' by Márcia Aparecida Jacomini, available at the School of Education, University of São Paulo (USP).

children, and organizes the educational process to contribute to the development of intellectual and manual skills, focusing in students' creativity and autonomy.

Referring to Paolo Nosella's reading of Gramsci's writings, one of the authors stressed that Gramsci's struggle to change the traditional school never meant lowering school requirements to ensure a good education for students. Thus, the democratization of the school defended by Gramsci is not an expansion of access to school without real conditions to promote quality education for the lower classes. A school with these characteristics, for the whole population, in Gramsci's analysis, must be the responsibility of the state, which needs to increase its resources for education.

The works also highlighted the school role in the formation of intellectuals of all levels, emphasizing that teachers play a progressive role when they place themselves as organic intellectuals of the popular classes and are committed to the transformation of society.

Regarding school duality, one of the authors resorted to Manacorda's analysis to say that it arises in modern age, as, with the consolidation of the bourgeoisie, the idea of an education equal to all was not consolidated and, under capitalist production, education began to be differentiated according to social classes. The authors pointed out that school duality is the hallmark of educational systems in capitalism.

They also discussed the idea of a “disinterested school” based on an emancipating rationality for the struggle to change society, as opposed to the “interested school” based on an instrumental/utilitarian rationality. In this discussion, Gramsci's critique of the vocational schools in his days, aimed at workers, was highlighted, while the children of the ruling classes received a humanistic education of general culture. The authors noted that, in Gramsci's analysis, the proliferation of technical schools gave a false sense of education democratization, since a worker qualification far from the formation that allows a political leadership in society should not be understood as a real democratization of education and society. Still on this topic, the authors have shown that, for Gramsci, traditional school was oligarchic because it was intended for the leading groups, and not for its way of teaching, because it is not the formation of leaders that gives the social mark of the school, but by the fact that each social group has a type of school that perpetuates social differences, always forming the subordinate classes for instrumental and non-governing functions.

A work presented the idea that, as a “civil society hegemony apparatus”, school can contribute to the construction of a counter-hegemony.

Regarding work as an educational principle, the authors pointed out that Gramsci understood that work was the educational principle of elementary school and that it should be organized around work in the generic sense, as an activity that constitutes humanity. It is not a preparation for the labor market, but labor as an activity that gives unity between theory and practice and makes us human beings, individually and collectively.

One author also pointed out that the unitary school proposed by Gramsci cannot be fully realized in capitalist society, since his proposal implies an education of general and professional culture for all and, in capitalism, school has been marked by a duality that distinguishes the type of training according to social class.

Brief references were also made to the importance Gramsci gave to the increase in faculty so that teachers could devote the necessary attention to all students; his criticism of elitist school and the defense of a school in which all young people have access to culture; the false dichotomy between instruction and education as, for the author, instruction is part of education; and the understanding that school, especially when its conservative function prevails, does not play a leading role in a revolutionary process.

From the different objects of study analyzed in the works, the authors used Gramsci's conceptions of school and education to think about education today. They considered that, in general, educational policies in their various aspects, especially in the 1990s, the most analyzed period by the authors of the theses and dissertations, go against Gramsci's thinking, as they are based on an economist perspective, instrumental for the certification of competences.

They reiterated that, contrary to what the analyzed educational policies propose, in Gramsci's unitary school there is unity between theory and practice, science and technique, aiming at guaranteeing to all the appropriation of historically constructed knowledge for a better understanding of reality and preparation for political action.

Appropriations and Contributions of Gramscian Thought on Education: Some Reflections

Regarding Gramscian ideas and concepts related to education used by the authors in their works, we consider that they were adequate to the analysis of their study objects and contributed to critically understand school and educational policies in capitalism, in times of neoliberalism. In only one of the nine works analyzed, Gramsci's ideas did not guide the analysis of the object but indicated the epistemological perspective with which the author developed the research.

From these general considerations, we would like to discuss some interpretations to contribute to the reflections and studies about the appropriations and uses of Gramsci's thought in the area of Education.

We begin by highlighting the approximations that some graduate students made between the thoughts of Antonio Gramsci and Paulo Freire, taking them as convergent in several aspects and problematizing the references to Boaventura de Souza Santos as author whose thinking comes close to Gramsci's writings.

In one of the works, the analysis were done based on authors who, using Gramscian thought as the theoretical framework, studied the same theme as the author. During the work, the graduate student/author quoted many times the book *Pela Mão de Alice* (Through Alice's Hand), by Boaventura de Souza Santos, indicating that this author has a Gramscian theoretical framework. However, it is interesting to note that there is no quotation or reference to Gramsci's writings, either in the text or in the bibliographic references of Santos's book, which makes us wonder if the author's analysis in this book are in line with Antonio Gramsci's thought. Moreover, the reflections and analysis undertaken by Boaventura Souza Santos are closer to postmodern perspective than with the dialectical historical materialism that guides Gramsci's thought.

Regarding what we consider inaccuracies in the appropriations and uses of Gramscian thought, we highlight one author's statement, based on Manacorda, that for Gramsci the state should not spend on students with mediocre performance simply because they were children of wealthy classes. Gramsci holds this discussion in a context in which not everyone had access to secondary school and where access was defined by social condition rather than school performance, which penalized students from lower classes. In a context towards the right to

education and universalization of all basic education under the responsibility of the state, the discussion of access based student performance or capacity is meaningless, no matter the social class.

Regarding the interpretation of Gramsci's writings, we will problematize the questions of unitary school viability in capitalist societies and of the teacher as intellectual in Gramscian meaning, so as to continue the debate.

Among educational researchers there are different understandings about the implementation of a unitary school in Gramscian terms in capitalist society. One of the authors of the papers analyzed stated that unitary school cannot be put into action in this type of society.

Based on Gramsci's writings, we saw that he created the proposal of unitary school as a response to the Italian school of his time, so it was a conception of education to dispute educational policies in the capitalist society of the time. In this sense, there was the need to create a hegemony around the unitary school educational project.

But we also saw that the unitary school project is articulated to the author's thinking, guided towards understanding the society in which he lives from theoretical categories that best explain reality and by elaborating the best forms of fight to overcome capitalism, and build a regulated or socialist society. For Gramsci, the struggle against capitalism involved the ideological dispute over a new hegemony that could sustain a revolutionary rupture. Therefore, building a hegemony around a unitary school educational proposal is a task that arises for the fight for socialism and not just as something to be accomplished in socialism. How much can be done from the assumptions of unitary school in a capitalist society will depend on the correlation of forces between the classes and the mobilization of the popular classes in defense of a unitary school, since this proposal contemplates mainly their interests.

Perhaps this can be better understood if articulated with Gramsci's (2012) discussion of cultural reform. The author considers that an intellectual and moral reform must be linked to an economic reform, that is, it is one is impossible without the other. This does not mean that economic reform must precede intellectual and moral reform, as stated by one of the authors analyzed. Gramsci's reflections indicate, especially in relation to hegemony, that in the program of economic reform there are elements of cultural reform. This means that the steps taken towards the transformation of capitalist forms of production and appropriation are dialectically articulated to changes in hegemonic conceptions that ideologically justify private property and

the appropriation of surplus value. That is, intellectual and moral reform, which requires another type of school, must begin in the struggle against capitalism, in the construction of a new hegemony that will contribute to the transformation of society, even if it can only be fully developed in this new society.

On the second question, we find in some works the idea that teachers are organic intellectuals of the popular classes. First, it is important to consider that teachers do not form a homogeneous category with a unique worldview. On the contrary, there are perhaps as many conceptions of the world among teachers, including disaggregated ones, as there are in society, and it is therefore not accurate to say that teachers are organic intellectuals of the subordinate classes. It seems to be more accurate to say that among teachers, considering all levels of education, there are organic intellectuals of different social classes.

Second, it would be necessary to see whether the group of teachers plays the role of intellectual in society, in the Gramscian sense of consciously acting as elaborators, organizers or disseminators of a given conception of the world. In the terms that all men are intellectuals, teachers are certainly intellectuals as presented by Gramsci, and in the teaching profession intellectual work prevails, but we do not share the understanding that all teachers play the role of organic intellectual in society in the sense Gramscian.

Final remarks

In this article, we analyze theses and dissertations about educational policies that adopted Gramsci as theoretical reference, more precisely his ideas and conceptions about education and school. We note that the author's writings on the subject were important references for graduate students to analyze educational policies and school from a critical perspective but, in some cases, we found some inaccuracies in the use of Gramsci's ideas.

Some authors have indicated that the duality of the Italian educational system analyzed and criticized by Gramsci in the 1920s is present in contemporary Brazilian school education. They also indicated that his proposal of a unitary school was created as an alternative of conception and organization of the school education, that would lead to the overcoming of the different types of school, molded according to social classes, besides being an embryo for the

construction of a unique basic education school that had work as its educational principle and integrates theory and practice, school and life, manual labor and intellectual labor.

Thus, we can say that Gramsci's writings on the educational theme have contributed to a reflexive and critical understanding of contemporary school and enlightened the construction of alternative proposals of school organization and policies for education, marking the actuality of the author's educational reflections.

Gramscian categories were also used by the graduate students to reflect on the limits imposed by Brazilian capitalist society to the provide a true school democratization and to discuss the need to transform society itself. In this sense, Gramscian theoretical framework has fueled a reflection on broader and deeper education and articulated with material and cultural production in a society divided into classes and with strong social inequalities.

In this context, we reiterate the importance that researchers, when using Gramsci's concepts, ideas, and analysis of education and school, consider that they are, in some measure, should articulate themselves with the author's complete ideas and, despite their universality as a classic, it needs to be considered within its historicity.

We know that an in-depth study of Gramsci's thinking is not always possible for masters and doctoral researchers who use it only as a theoretical framework. However, this should not discourage young researchers from appropriating themselves of Gramscian categories and use them in their work, when they explain and enrich understandings about educational phenomena, but they should be aware that reflections on education and school are closely related to a set of concepts, such as hegemony, intellectual and ideology, which acquired new meanings in Gramsci's thought.

In this sense, postgraduate programs in Education can contribute to a more accurate use of the author's thinking, offering courses that allow the reading of Gramsci's writings, based on philological studies and editing of notebooks, letters and writings. politicians of the late 1990s and early 2000s, coordinated by Carlos Nelson Coutinho with the collaboration of Marco Aurélio Nogueira and Luiz Sérgio Henriques.

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