

# The Gramscian concept of Integral State in educational policy researches<sup>1</sup>

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## Abstract

In this article, we analyze the interpretations and uses of the Gramscian concept of Integral State in master's and doctorate papers in Education that have researched educational policies. Our aim was to investigate the appropriation of that concept by postgraduates in the light of Gramsci's writings. The research involved documentary and bibliographical analysis. Five theses and seven dissertations, from a set of 32 papers, which reported in their respective summaries the use of Gramscian's thinking as a theoretical framework produced from 2000 to 2010, have been examined. The papers were read in their entirety and the analysis fell on how the authors used the concept of Integral State. We have observed that such concept constituted an important theoretical reference, although with different uses and articulations regarding the objects of study. In some cases, it was not a theoretical framework, in the sense that the author uses it to analyze its object of study, but as a concept that expresses an epistemological perspective, the historical materialism or philosophy of the praxis, which guided the research as a whole. We have also found some inaccuracies regarding the use of the concept that deserve attention from researchers. We see that the concept of Integral State can contribute to the understanding of the complex relationships that involve the agenda, formulation, implementation and evaluation of educational policies. We highlight the fruitfulness and timeliness of this concept in public policy analysis for Education and the importance of broader reading of Gramsci's writings for appropriate uses, despite its various interpretations.

## Keywords

Integral State concept – Antonio Gramsci – Educational policies – Academic production.

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## Introduction

In the research *The academic production in educational policies in Brazil: characteristics and trends (2000-2010)*<sup>3</sup>, we found out that there was a sensitive gap of review studies that analyze the theoretical-methodological frameworks used in educational policy researches<sup>4</sup>. We also found that Antonio Gramsci was the most quoted author in the abstracts of the papers, as a theoretical reference to the analysis of the objects of study of postgraduate students in Education.

Gramsci's presence in the area of Education has been recently reaffirmed by Gramsci's bibliographic Map in Brazil, produced at the Center for Studies and Research in Philosophy, Politics and Education from the Faculty of Education of Fluminense Federal University. The survey was based on the following criteria: papers that had Gramsci or Gramscian concepts as their research object, papers that used Gramscian concepts as the main reference for analysis of the research object, Marxist papers that used Gramscian concepts as a reference and eclectic papers that had Gramscian concepts as one of the central references. Out of the 508 theses and dissertations collected in the survey, 234 (46%) are from Education. Out of the 35 areas in which papers were collected, besides Education, only four had 20 or more papers, namely: History, 45 (8.85%), Social Work, 43 (8.46%), Social Sciences, 27 (5.31%) and Political Sciences, 20 (3.93%) (SEMERARO et al., 2016). These data reinforce the importance of researching which and how the Gramscian concepts are appropriate and used in papers in the area of Education, in the specificity of this text, those texts dedicated to the study of educational policies.

The research now developed has intertwined two important issues for studies in educational policies: a close look at how theoretical referentials are constituted and epistemological perspectives in research within the Postgraduate Programs in Education, and how Antonio Gramsci's ideas and concepts have been appropriated and used by the researchers.

The relevance of studies of this nature lies, on the one hand, in the theoretical and methodological challenges of research in the field of Education, as indicated by several studies (CUNHA, 1979; MELLO, 1983; FRANCO, 1988; LUNA, 1988; WARDE, 1990; BRANDÃO, 2002; NOSELLA, 2010; GATTI, 2012), and specifically in the studies of public policies for Education (AZEVEDO, 1997; AZEVEDO; AGUIAR, 2001a, 2001b; MAINARDES, 2009; TELLO; MAINARDES, 2012). And, on the other hand, in his contribution to the understanding of the different appropriations and uses of Gramsci's theoretical formulations in the educational area, a result of both the characteristics of the work itself and the way of its diffusion in Brazil (SECCO, 2002).

Thus, in this article, we present part of a postdoctoral study about the appropriations and uses of Antonio Gramsci's thinking in master's and doctoral papers in the field

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**3-** The research was sponsored by the Higher Education Personnel Improvement Coordination (Capes) and the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq).

**4-** Continuing the previous study, from 2015 to 2017, the research *Epistemological and methodological issues of academic production in educational policies in Brazil (2000-2010)*, funded by the CNPq universal edict, process 446213 / 2014-4, was developed with the participation of 10 researchers from six Brazilian universities.

of educational policies. The theses and dissertations were taken from a bank of 1,283 papers, organized in previous research<sup>5</sup>. For the composition of this bank, we selected the programs that had a grade equal to or higher than five in the three-year evaluation of the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (Capes), which ended in 2010. The papers that make up the bank were produced from 2000 to 2010, in 20 postgraduate programs in Education from 20 higher education institutions and collected from the Capes Theses Bank in 2012.

In this article, we discuss the uses of the Gramscian concept of Integral State in 12 papers (seven dissertations and five theses), whose authors used this concept to construct and analyze the objects of study of their researches. In the postdoctoral research, 32 papers that indicated in the abstracts the use of Gramscian's thinking as a theoretical framework were selected; out of these, 12 used Integral State as the main Gramscian concept in the work.

It is a documental and bibliographical research (LÜDKE; ANDRÉ, 1986), whose main analyzed documents were theses and dissertations. According to Lakatos; Marconi (2001), documental research draws on primary sources and bibliographic research on secondary sources. In the first case, they are documents that have not yet received analytical treatment from any author; in the second, they are documents that have already been analyzed and used by other authors.<sup>6</sup>

To analyze the appropriations and uses of the concept of Integral State, we proceeded to a complete reading of the theses and dissertations, followed by the completion of an analytical form containing information about Gramsci's theme, objectives and methodological concepts/ideas presented in the papers, as well as a survey about the writings of the author and interpreters that were cited in the text and references.

The theoretical framework of the research was Gramscian's thinking, especially the texts published under the title Prison Notebooks (GRAMSCI, 2002, 2007a, 2007b, 2011, 2012, 2013). In some instances, the Letters from prison (GRAMSCI, 2005) and the Italian critical edition of Prison Notebooks (GRAMSCI, 2014) were used. We have also dialogued with some interpreters for a better understanding of Gramscian's thinking. We attempted to analyze the concept of Integral State in relation to the whole of the author's thinking as we understand that there is articulation among the various concepts elaborated by Gramsci.

We first discuss the Gramscian concept of Integral State, then we will present how the authors of the theses and dissertations used such concept and, finally, will problematize some uses of Gramscian's thinking in the papers.

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**5-** It refers to the research The academic production in educational policies in Brazil: characteristics and trends (2000-2010), funded by the Announcement / Call CNPq / CAPES No. 07/2011. The Bank is available at: <<http://www2.uefs.br/cede/docs/a-academica-em-politicas-educacionais-2000-2010.pdf>>.

**6-** It is considered that the analyzed theses and dissertations are the primary sources of this study, given the specificity on which they were studied, regardless whether they were used in other papers by other authors.

## Concept of Integral State<sup>7</sup> in the Prison Notebooks

We will not make an extensive foray into the concept of Integral State, as they have already been widely discussed by various authors (BUCI-GLUCKMANN, 1980; SOARES, 1992; DIAS, 1996; COUTINHO, 2003; LIGUORI, 2007; BIANCHI, 2008), but we will refer mainly to the aspects most present in the theses and dissertations analyzed in order to present the reference that helped us in the analysis of Gramsci's uses of the concept of State.

The concept of State in Gramscian's thinking is more directly linked to the concepts of hegemony and intellectual. For the formulation of this concept, Gramsci dialogued with the conception of State in the Marxist tradition and analyzed a reality that could not be understood in its complexity if the State were understood only as a governmental apparatus (executive, legislative, judiciary, army), as in western societies there is a set of organizations that contribute to shaping the State action and that plays an important role in building and maintaining the hegemony of the ruling class.

The Sardinian author noted that in the so-called western societies, including Italy, which Gramsci analyzed more deeply, the so-called private organizations, school, press, church, party, union, associations, etc., form a network of support or contestation of political society's performance, or State in a restricted sense, and that ideological and political disputes occur mainly in these spaces that Gramsci called civil society and which, together with political society, make up the Integral State.

In a letter to Tatiana<sup>8</sup> from September 7, 1931, Gramsci talks about his study project on intellectuals and the concept of State.

The study project I have done on intellectuals is very broad and, in fact, I do not believe that there are books on this subject in Italy. There is, of course, much scholarly material, but scattered in an infinite number of local historical magazines and archives. On the other hand, I greatly extend the notion of intellectual, and I am not limited to the current notion, which refers to the great intellectuals. This study also leads to certain determinations of the concept of State, which is usually understood as political society (or dictatorship, or coercive apparatus, to shape the popular mass according to a type of production and the economy of a given moment), and not as a balance of political society with civil society (or hegemony of a social group over the whole national society, exercised through the so-called private organizations, such as the church, unions, schools, etc.), and is especially in civil society that the intellectuals operate (Bem. Croce,

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**7-** In Gramsci and the State, Christinne Buci-Glucksmann (1980) refers to the Gramscian conception of State enlargement (Integral State). From that publication, the terms Extended or Integral State have come to be used to refer to Gramsci's concept of State. They were found in many of the papers analyzed in the research. In the Prison Notebooks, Gramsci uses the term Integral State in paragraph 10 of Notebook 6 to refer to the fact that after the French Revolution a group "presenting itself as an integral 'State', with all the necessary intellectual and moral forces and enough to organize a complete and perfect society". (GRAMSCI, 2013, p. 436) And in paragraph 155 of the same Notebook, when discussing politics and military art: "In politics, the error comes from an inaccurate understanding of what the State is (in its full meaning: dictatorship + hegemony [...])" (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 261).

**8-** Tatiana was Gramsci's sister-in-law and was primarily responsible for his contact with the outside world during the prison years. In some letters, he writes Tania who is the short form of Tatiana in Russian.

for example, is a kind of secular pope and is a very effective instrument of hegemony, although he may sometimes differ from this or that government, etc.). (GRAMSCI, 2005, p. 84).

As part of his studies, Gramsci proposes a new understanding of the intellectual, but here we are interested in Gramsci's concept of State presented in his Notebooks. He draws attention to the fact that the State constitutes a balance between political and civil society, thus modifying the usual concept by broadening it. In doing so, he maintains the coercive elements of the State, but adds consensus to indicate that the hegemony that one class exercises over the whole society through the State does not only result from coercive power but also from persuasion. In the Notebooks, Gramsci says that coercion and consensus are predominantly characteristics of political society and civil society respectively. This means that in both spheres of the Integral State we find coercion and consensus, but while coercion is predominant in political society, consensus is in civil society. The relationship between political society and civil society is dialectical, of unity and distinction. In the words of Guido Liguori (2007, p. 16):

[...] the many paragraphs about direction and dominance, strength and consensus etc. lead us to understand that the relationship between political society and civil society is also dialectic, of unity-distinction. This means that the distinction is not organic.

One of the most common quotations in the papers that used the Gramscian concept of State was "State = political society + civil society, that is, armored hegemony of coercion." (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 248, C. 6, § 88) This "formula" epitomizes the idea that the State should not be understood solely as a political society, the predominant expression of coercion. That is, in order to understand the State, one must consider the characteristic elements of political society and those that are typical of civil society in which persuasion and hegemony prevail.

With this formulation, Gramsci sought to answer a two-order problem: a better understanding of the State in modern capitalist societies (the so-called western States<sup>9</sup>) and the construction of strategies for the socialist revolution. Gramsci realized that there is in western societies a set of institutions that differ from those which are characteristic of the State in the narrow sense, which participate in the construction of the hegemony of the ruling class and influence the performance of the institutions of political society, mainly through consensus. Then he began to think of a new concept of State, within the framework of the Philosophy of the praxis, and of a reorganization of the strategies of struggle against capitalism, which consider, more sharply, the necessary construction of a new hegemony.

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<sup>9</sup> Gramsci calls Western States those in which in addition to the government apparatus, characteristic of political society, there is a set of institutions, which he calls "private organizations", which play an important role in the dispute for hegemony. "In the East, the State was everything, civil society was primitive and gelatinous; in the West there was a fair relationship between the State and civil society, and by oscillating the State one could immediately recognize a robust structure of civil society." (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 266, C. 7, § 16) The term East and West refers not to the geographical location but to the different social forms of contemporary capitalism.

In this formulation, Gramsci understands that civil society is the privileged space of dispute of class hegemony, a place of construction of a hegemony that can give the subordinate classes the condition of political direction (moral and intellectual), qualifying them to become government. This would be possible in a condition in which the legal government and the institutions of political society would no longer exercise the political direction of society, that is, the hitherto hegemonic class would lose direction and the other class would exercise it being therefore leader, although not dominant.

Thus, understanding the State as the conjunction of political society (coercion) with civil society (space of dispute for hegemony), which he calls the Integral State, Gramsci considers that the subordinate class, before becoming dominant, must be a leader, that is, his conception of the world becomes hegemonic in every society. Such achievement by the working class is a *sine qua non* condition for the construction of socialism.

There are several interpretations of Gramsci's concept of Integral State<sup>10</sup>. We even have some cases of reformist or even liberal interpretations. However, we find in his writings a significant set of elements that lead us to understand his elaboration in a perspective that, when turning the attention to the superstructure, does not disregard its dialectical relationship with the structure, that is, does not disdain the relations of production and of its state of development.

Gramsci relies on a commentary in the *Nouvelles littéraires* on Daniel Halévy's book, *Decadence of Freedom*<sup>11</sup>, in which the author notices that in France, from 1870 to the day the book was written, the initiatives of political bodies were not derived from universal suffrage, that is, of the State in a restricted sense, but of private organizations (capitalist companies, of State officials, etc.), to emphasize that by 'State' it must be understood, besides the apparatus of government, also the apparatus 'deprived' from 'hegemony or civil society'. (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 258, C. 6, § 137).

This paragraph, from Notebook 6, allows us to understand the links of civil society organizations with the structure, that is, with the capitalist form of production. Thus, both political society and civil society, in the "formula" of the Integral State, are dialectically related to the economic structure.

In Notebook 13, paragraph 18, there is a passage in which the meaning of civil society is identified with economic activity itself. It refers to the discussion about free traders and economists.

The formulation of the free trade movement is based on a theoretical error whose practical origin is not difficult to identify, that is, it is based on the distinction between political society and civil society, which from methodological distinction is transformed and presented as organic distinction. Thus, it is said that economic activity belongs to civil society and that the State should not intervene in its regulation. But given that civil society and the State identify themselves in the reality of the facts, it must be established that liberalism is also a "regulation" of a State character, introduced and maintained by legislative and coercive means: it is a fact of

**10** - See Bianchi (2008).

**11** - "Daniel Halévy (1872-1961), critic and historian, was close to youth socialism, but later assumed right-wing positions." (COUTINHO, 2011, p. 361).

conscious will of its own ends, and not the spontaneous, automatic expression of the economic fact. Therefore, liberalism is a political program designed to modify, when it triumphs, the leaders of a State and the economic program of the State itself, that is, to modify the distribution of national income. (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 47-48, C. 13, § 18).

It follows that, in the Notebooks, the term civil society is used in two ways, although the most frequent and what marks the concept of the Integral State is that expressed in the sense of hegemony of a class over the whole society. Highlighting this diverse use and the relationships and identity between Integral State and structure or civil society in the sense used in this paragraph is important, because Noberto Bobbio (1999), in the book *Essays about Gramsci and the Concept of Civil Society*<sup>12</sup>, presents an interpretation of Gramsci's thinking, which was very widespread and seems to us inaccurate when we consider Gramscian's thinking as a whole.

For Bobbio (1999), Gramsci shifts the concept of civil society from the scope of material relationships, from structure, to that of superstructure, as a set of ideological-cultural relationships. Bobbio's understanding of the Gramscian concept of civil society makes him question whether in Gramsci the active moment in the development of history becomes superstructural. This is due to the centrality of civil society in historical development, which in Marx is understood as a structural moment.

As seen in the quote above, Gramsci also used the term civil society to designate economic activity. He also affirmed that civil society and the State are identified, that is, in a restricted or integral sense, the State maintains with the civil society (here understood as structural moment) a relationship of unity and distinction, in the sense that these two moments that make up the whole society are lined up. In other words, Integral State organizations and institutions (political society and civil society), in general terms, conform to the type of production of a given society, as it is, to some extent, consonant with them. This does not mean eliminating the contradictions of this eminently dialectical relationship; on the contrary, Gramsci's entire effort to construct concepts that allow for a better understanding of the State is related to the complexity of this relationship in practice.

Thus, we do not understand, as Bobbio puts it, that the centrality of historical development in the Gramscian perspective has shifted to the superstructure, but we understand that the centrality lies in this complex relationship between these two moments of social production, which Gramsci draws our attention to the fact that between the State, in a narrow sense, and the economy itself there is a set of organizations, called private, in quotation marks, that contribute to the hegemony of a class in relation to society. Such hegemony may be more anchored in consensus or strength, considering that both are present in every hegemonic relationship.

Bianchi's analysis (2008, p. 184) helps in understanding the relationship between structure and superstructure.

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**12-** This book was cited in the references of one of the papers analyzed in this research. However, it should be noted that Bobbio's interpretation did not markedly guide the work.

Through the categories of unity and distinction, Gramsci thematizes the “superior elaboration of structure in superstructure” (Q 10 / II, § 6, p. 1244), that is, the process by which the particular who has a place in economic society becomes “State-made”, that is, in its becoming, the structure is over-structured as civil society in the Integral State. (see PRESTIPINO, 2004, p. 71).

For Gramsci, law as well as schools and other institutions contribute to the State fulfilling the function of creating and maintaining a certain kind of civilization and citizen through the diffusion of certain customs and attitudes and the inhibition and exclusion of others. This is the educating role of the State, that is, it is an educator “insofar as it tends precisely to create a new type or level of civilization”. (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 28, C. 13, § 11) Thus:

[...] every State is ethical in that one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a certain cultural and moral level, a level (or type) that corresponds to the development needs of the productive forces and, therefore, to the interests of the ruling classes. (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 288, C. 8, § 179).

Based on the above statement, Gramsci argues that in Hegel’s time the bourgeoisie’s ethic or universality could be affirmed due to its extensive development, which seemed unlimited, and has not been confirmed by history. Thus, Gramsci considers that only the social group that proposes the end of the State and of itself can in fact create an ethical State, whose tendency is to eliminate the condition of dominant and dominated and to “create a technical-moral unitary social organism.” (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 288, C. 8, § 179).

In analyzing the progressive role of the bourgeoisie towards the preceding ruling classes, Gramsci points out that the bourgeoisie, unlike those, tends to assimilate the whole society at its cultural and economic level, thus the whole function of the State is transformed and it becomes an educator. With the end of the progressive role of the bourgeoisie, not only does it fail to assimilate new elements, but it also loses part of itself, thereby turning to “the conception of State as pure force, etc”. It follows that a class that proposes to assimilate the whole society and is really capable of doing so will render the function of the State (narrow sense) and law useless for having exhausted their mission and having been absorbed by civil society (GRAMSCI, 2012, 275, C. 8, § 2).

Regarding the usefulness of the concept of Integral State to analyze public policies for Education, we consider that it allows a better understanding of the processes that involve the agenda, elaboration, implementation and evaluation of public policies, as both organizations participate or may participate in them, both institutions of political society and those of civil society. The concept of Integral State allows us to grasp the complexity involving public policies and favors analyzes that consider the various social subjects that participate in the process.



## **Integral State: a fertile concept for educational policy analysis<sup>13</sup>**

The Gramscian concept of State, which involves political society (government - executive, legislative, judiciary, army), a space of force predominance, and civil society (various organizations - church, schools, press, trade unions, political parties, associations, etc.), a predominantly persuasive space, was widely used by the authors of the papers. This is justified as the theses and dissertations dealt with public policies for Education and the concept of State becomes important in this type of study.

Public policy analysis<sup>14</sup>, understood as actions that aim to respond to a public problem and that are central to government decisions, despite the influence of other civil society subjects, demand the establishment of an understanding of what the State is and its performance. It is in this sense that the papers used Gramsci's concept of Integral State to analyze the various public policies for Education that were the object of study of theses and dissertations.

A common point to all the papers that used the Gramscian concept of State was the assumption that Gramsci, starting from the conception of State inscribed in the Marxist tradition, expanded the way of conceiving it, once that to understand the character of the State in countries of the western bloc, the idea of a restricted State, merely as a government apparatus, which serves absolutely and without contradiction to the interests of the ruling class, is not enough.

In some papers, we find the understanding, especially with reference in Coutinho (2006), that in Brazil there was a strengthening of civil society after the civil-military dictatorship and that this allows us to think of the State as a space of dispute, in which different forces act to build a hegemony around his propositions about educational policies and public resources.

Several papers have analyzed the educational policies implemented in the 1990s, under the aegis of neoliberal ideas and policies aimed at lowering State participation in the provision of resources for social policies, and, consequently, for educational policies. Thus, the Gramscian concept of State has allowed that educational policies were analyzed on the basis of disputes between different sectors of society, organized in political society and civil society, which identify and act in defense of class interests and class fractions.

In general, the authors of the papers have argued that in a Gramscian conception of State it should not be understood merely as a bureaucratic structure, representing exclusively the interests of a class, but as a space of dispute in which, depending on the correlation of forces, claims of the subordinate classes can be turned into public policy.

Another aspect presented in the papers refers to the educating role of the State, that is, the understanding that every hegemonic relationship is a pedagogical relationship and that the State, understood in the broad sense, acts pedagogically in the political education

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**13-** To avoid exposure of the authors whose theses and dissertations were analyzed in the research, we chose not to indicate the author of the appropriations and uses of Gramscian's thinking who will be presented in this topic and in the following. At the end of the article are the references of the analyzed papers. Interested readers may refer to the appendix of the postdoc report Appropriations and Uses of Antonio Gramsci's Theoretical Contributions in Research on Educational Policy (2000-2010), by Márcia Aparecida Jacomini, University of São Paulo School of Education, 2018, at which contains all the information about appropriations and uses of Gramsci's thought of each author of theses and dissertations.

**14-** On different definitions of public policy see: Laswell (1951); Dye (1987, 2010); Souza (2007).

of the population, a fundamental condition for hegemony construction. In this context, in the specific analyzes of the papers, both the educative function of political society and civil society instances were considered, emphasizing that these, often, in the context of the 1990s, contributed as “private hegemony apparatus”, for the maintenance of the bourgeois hegemony, as they acted as organizers of collective will and consensus, that is, under the direction of the bourgeoisie, a significant part of civil society organizations contributed to educate and legitimize the capitalist order.

Within the framework of the comprehension of the Integral State, in the papers, there was no lack of mediations and analyzes about the fact that sometimes, in the formulation and implementation of educational policies, the decisions of the government, especially the executive, prevailed. Therefore, the institutions of political society predominate, especially in cases where the rulers enjoy wide hegemony around their ideology and politics.

Civil society, as part of the concept of Integral State, has been widely exploited as a space for consensus building and the struggle for hegemony between classes and class fractions, in which intellectuals play an important role. In this sense, the domain and moral and intellectual direction linked to the hegemony of the ruling class were also discussed.

Thus, these aspects corroborated the verification of how and to what extent the instances of civil society participated and influenced the processes of educational policy making, in the specificity of each object of study. Some papers have pointed out that the institutions of civil society work mainly to seek consensus through persuasion and convincing, while the political society, the government apparatus, relied mainly on coercion and imposition.

For some authors, the civil society, at present, has been mainly collaborator of governments (political society), which does not invalidate the fact that in this sphere are the possibilities of ideological and political disputes and the performance of subordinate groups.

The concept of Integral State also helped in the analysis of the processes that contributed to the formation of a new consensus in contemporary Brazil within the framework of neoliberalism. In one of the papers, the capitalist State, which asserted itself after World War II, was characterized by the author as a synthesis between political society and civil society, forming a historical block that dialectically articulates structure and superstructure.

In the analysis of some papers, it was considered that, in modern States, economic crises can generate political crises, when the dominant class private hegemony organizations cannot maintain consensus on a project of society, that is, they have highlighted the role that civil society organizations play both in maintaining existing hegemony and in building a new hegemony.

In some cases, the Gramscian concept of State was not used for a direct analysis of the research object, but as a framework for understanding the broader context in which the object of study is inserted. Thus, from the idea that every State is a class State, therefore, in capitalist societies the bourgeoisie is the ruling class and is dominant, they sought to ascertain to what extent the different classes and class fractions, which operate in the

institutions of civil society, this State constituent in the Gramscian sense, disputed and acted in decisions on public policies for Education. Consequently, in analyzing educational policies, they sought to verify how civil society organizations, in their different political and ideological shades, participated and influenced in the design and implementation of a particular educational policy.

Macro analyzes of Brazilian society and State were present in a set of papers. In them, Gramscian's thinking was mainly used for the understanding of the general context that conditions the educational policies studied.

Briefly, these were the uses of the Gramscian concept of State in the papers in which it predominated over others that made up the theoretical framework under which the authors of theses and dissertations built and analyzed their objects of study.

The Gramscian concept of State contributed to an understanding of the educational policies analyzed in the papers that made up the scope of the research, as it allowed the authors to understand the contradictions and disputes registered in the various organizations that make up political society and civil society, without losing sight of the class character of the State.

## **Interpretations of Gramsci's concept of State in the papers**

Regarding the use of the concept of Integral State, civil society + political society (hegemony and coercion), we have found in two papers the understanding that this "formula" indicates that the State is a junction of civil society and political society. It seems to us that this way of expressing the meaning of Gramsci's synthesis to express the concept of Integral State is somewhat mechanical and does not consider all the implications of Gramsci's theoretical construction to understand societies in which around the government apparatus, there is a set of organizations that participate in the construction of consensus in favor of the hegemony of the ruling class.

Thus, it is not a junction between political society organizations and civil society organizations, but a dialectical relationship between them, permeated by contradictions and disputes. In a longer quotation from this paragraph, we find in what sense Gramsci presents "State = political society + civil society".

We are always in the realm of State and Government identification, which is precisely a representation of the corporate-economic form, that is, of the confusion between civil society and political society, since it should be noted that in the general notion of State there are elements that must be referred to the notion of civil society (in the sense, as one might say, that State = political society + civil society, that is, armored hegemony of coercion). (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 248, C. 6, § 88).

Thus, State = political society + civil society is in the sense that in the conception of Integral State there are elements that are characteristics of civil society: consensus and hegemony.

At this point it is important to point out that Gramsci's effort was to understand how the restricted State, or political society, operated in a context in which civil society acted and influenced government decisions and the maintenance of the democratic rule of law and to understand how elements of State coercion can be minimized as elements of civil society are affirmed. Still in the sequence of the paragraph.

In a State doctrine that conceives the State as being capable of exhaustion and dissolution in the regulated society, the theme is fundamental. One can imagine the element State-coercion in the process of exhaustion as increasingly conspicuous elements of regulated society (or ethical State, or civil society) are affirmed. (GRAMSCI, 2012, p. 248, C. 6, § 88).

Therefore, it is not a question of joining these two spheres in the Integral State, but of understanding that when we analyze the State's actions, we must also consider the role of civil society as part of the State.

Another aspect observed is that, in some papers, the way the concept of Integral State was approached makes it look that Gramsci defended an expanded State, in which "civil society is a partner in the management of society", or that it should be claimed the expansion of the State as a way of meeting the demands of the subordinate classes. It seems to us that this way of asking the question indicates some inaccuracy in the understanding and use of the concept. It is not a question of claiming that the State be expanded, but of understanding that the concept of State in the Marxist tradition, in the narrow sense, was insufficient to understand the complexity of the processes of domination that involve persuasion and coercion in the construction of hegemony.

The State, thus understood, allows us to grasp that in civil society, to which Gramsci refers, is the possibility of organization of the subordinate classes, in unions, political parties, associations, among others, with active participation that leads to the expansion of democratization of society and the dispute for hegemony. In the words of Nogueira (2003, p. 224):

In this conception, therefore, civil society appears as a space where global projects of society are built, capacities of ethical-political direction are articulated, where power and domination are disputed. A space for intervention and organization of new States and new people. A space of struggle, government and contestation, in which collective wills are formed.

An important discussion to think about Gramsci's thinking in educational policy studies is to determine how well a concept is suitable for analyzing the object of research. From the papers investigated in this research, we problematize the proposal of an author to choose Antonio Gramsci as theoretical reference of the work for his contribution in relation to democratic management. Gramsci wrote about many themes, but the discussion about democracy, and the specificity of the democratic management of the school, was not among the topics addressed by the author.

In notebooks, the word democracy has been used several times, in paragraph 191 of Notebook 8 - Hegemony and democracy, Gramsci considers that the most realistic meaning of the term democracy must be that which links it to the concept of hegemony.

Among the many meanings of democracy, it seems to me that the most realistic and concrete can be deduced in connection with the concept of hegemony. In the hegemonic system, democracy exists between the ruling group and the ruled groups insofar as the development of the economy, and hence the legislation expressing this development, favors the molecular passage of the directed groups to the leading group. (GRAMSCI, 2012, C. 8, § 191).

In the first paragraph of Book 20, which discusses the Catholic action, Gramsci refers to democracy to explicit that one way to analyze the democracy of a movement, that is, the participation of the basic elements in the definition of actions, is to verify the criteria how the directions are chosen and renewed.

We highlight these two passages, because they are moments when Gramsci stops at the meaning of democracy articulated to hegemony and democracy within the movements. Thus, we point out that the presence of the word democracy in the Notebooks does not end a discussion or conceptualization of the term by the author.

This does not mean the inexistence in the author's work of passages that allow us to think of participation and democracy as part of the many reflections and concepts that permeate his writings. But it is important to make it explicit that Gramsci does not do with the term democracy what he did with hegemony, State, ideology, among many others, to which he devoted long analyzes and even conceptualized them, differently from the Marxist tradition.

Thus, the author's consideration of the work that Gramsci has a popular-democratic perspective and that the exercise of democracy is directly linked to the fact that subordinates leave the condition of directed and exercise the function of leading, that is, actively participate in the society's policy decisions and, in the specificity of the analyzed work, of the school, indicates that he used a broader interpretation of the writings, to situate Gramsci as an author who has a popular-democratic perspective regarding the management of the public school. However, such perspective is not explicit in the author's writings and contrasts with other interpretations that see in the author a revolutionary perspective.

In any case, Gramsci's conceptions of Education and School in Notebook 12 indicate a perspective of democratic management of the school in line with all his thinking, especially with regard to the relationship between democracy and hegemony.

## **Final considerations**

By analyzing the uses of Gramscian's thinking with regard to the concept of Integral State, we observed that it constituted an important theoretical framework for the analysis of the respective objects of study. But it is important to note that the concept had different uses and articulations towards the objects of study.

In cases where the concept of Integral State was mobilized to analyze very specific educational policies, it did not constitute a theoretical framework, in the sense that the author analyzes its object of study, but as a concept that expresses an epistemological perspective, the historical materialism or philosophy of the praxis, which guides the research as a whole.

This observation is important to evaluate the relevance of mobilizing certain concepts that, due to their comprehensiveness, do not say much about the specific subject being studied, especially when the author does not establish the proper relationships of the object of study with the macro aspects, leaving the theoretical framework as a separate chapter in the paper, given the difficulty of using it in the analysis of empirical data.

Except for these situations, which deserve the attention of researchers (thesis advisors and their students), our study shows that, in relation to the educational policy researches, the concept of Integral State can contribute to the understanding of the complex relationships involving the agenda, formulation, implementation and evaluation of educational policies.

Finally, we underline the fruitfulness and timeliness of such concept in public policy analysis for Education and the importance, in line with a set of new studies on Gramsci's thinking, from a more thorough and detailed reading of the author's work for appropriate uses, despite the various interpretations.

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