


POPULAR EDUCATION AND RESISTANCE – A GRAMSCIAN REREADING TO BUILD EMANCIPATORY KNOWLEDGE

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ABSTRACT

When studying the writings of Antonio Gramsci, it is perceived that his reflection on popular education establishes a direct relationship with the needs of the less favored classes. Its educational conception is not limited to ideological use by the dominant classes but also provides theoretical subsidies so that the subaltern classes can rethink and reconfigure their paths toward emancipation. In this sense, the history of popular education, as the object of this research, can be analyzed from the challenges and tensions between the subaltern and dominant classes. Thus, we question: how can popular education act as an instrument of resistance and emancipation of the subaltern classes in the face of the hegemony imposed by the dominant classes? To conduct this analysis, we based ourselves on the works of Antônio Gramsci (1980; 1981; 1982; 2001) and his interlocutors such as Brandão (2009), Del Roio (2006), Fonseca (2017), Freire (1979; 1980; 1987; 2011) and Schlesener (2016). From the methodological point of view, we adopted a qualitative approach, according to Minayo (2016), combined with the bibliographic research proposed by Gil (1999) and the interpretative understanding based on the perspective of Weber (2009). The results of the research show that popular education acts as an instrument of resistance and emancipation of the subaltern classes by promoting the active participation of popular subjects in the educational process. The dialogical and critical approach allows students to recognize their conditions of subordination and develop strategies to transform them. In addition, popular education strengthens social movements and community organizations, creating spaces for autonomy and struggle against the hegemony imposed by the dominant classes.

Keywords: Popular Education. Emancipation. Hegemony. Resistance.

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INTRODUCTION

POPULAR EDUCATION AND EMANCIPATION: THE CONSTRUCTION OF CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND THE STRUGGLE OF THE SUBALTERN CLASSES – INTRODUCING

Popular education, as conceived by Gramsci, is not limited to formal education, but presents itself as a space for the critical construction of knowledge and class consciousness (Santos, *et. al.*, 2024). For him, the hegemony of the dominant classes is sustained through institutionalized education, which reinforces the dominant ideology and hinders the organization of subaltern groups. However, popular education can act as a counterpoint to this structure by providing an educational process that emerges from the needs of the working class. As Gramsci points out, "[...] every social group, born in the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates for itself, at the same time, organically, one or more layers of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and awareness of its function, not only in the economic field but also in the social and political field" (Gramsci, 2001, p. 15). In this sense, the traditional school, according to Gramsci, "[...] it is the instrument to elaborate intellectuals at different levels" and, therefore, subaltern groups must create their organic intellectuals, because "[...] the enormous development obtained by school activity and organization indicates the importance assumed in the modern world by intellectual categories and functions" (Gramsci, 2001, p. 19).

For Gramsci, a 'current intellectual' (using the expression of his opponent Gentile), an 'organic intellectual', *must* 'democratize' himself, to be 'national-popular', to adopt the point of view of the 'subaltern class', without this meaning a downgrading of scientific activities, but a political process of education of the 'simple' (Fonseca, 2017, p. 113).

For Brandão (2009: 37):

Popular education is, today, the possibility of practice governed by difference, as long as its reason has the same direction: the strengthening of popular power, through the construction of class knowledge. Therefore, more important than intending to define it, to fix the truth of its being, is to discover where it is realized and to point out the tendencies through which it transforms education into the experience of popular education.

The challenges faced by the subaltern classes in accessing and consolidating a truly emancipatory education are diverse and structural. As Schlesener (2016) points out, the reproduction of the dominant ideology through conventional education imposes "invisible

shackles"¹⁶ that naturalize social inequalities and limit the possibilities of transforming reality (p. 13). These shackles, according to the author, "[...] convince them that the social reproduction of material life is the one that presents itself and no other" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 25), thus perpetuating a teaching model that reinforces the subordination of the popular classes. In contrast, popular education seeks to break with this structure, promoting critical and collective learning, in which historical subjects recognize themselves as protagonists of social change. As Schlesener points out, "[...] science and education must become forms of emancipation, of subversion of praxis" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 88), transforming the school into a space for workers' struggle and organization.

The school is a privileged space to begin to break these ideological shackles that bind us and make us believe that domination is natural, that inequality exists because individuals have different capacities, and some win and others lose because we see social relations from the perspective of positivism or liberalism. [...] We have to subvert this practice and show that historical slavery continues in new invisible forms of domination, which now pass through the formation of our subjectivity (Schlesener, 2016, p. 181-182).

The definition of popular education is deeply linked to the notion of active participation and the recognition of popular knowledge as an essential element in the educational process (Santos, *et. al.*, 2024). Paulo Freire, one of the greatest exponents of this field, emphasizes that education must start from the reality of the students and be constructed in a dialogical way¹⁷, enabling awareness of the oppressions experienced. For

¹⁶ The "invisible shackles" that imprison the subaltern classes within the logic of ideological domination are widely debated by Schlesener (2016) in his article entitled **"Invisible Shackles": Education and Ideology in the Reproduction of Hegemony**. The author argues that formal education, structured under the molds of the dominant ideology, operates in a subtle way to naturalize social inequalities and prevent the emergence of a critical consciousness among workers. This process occurs not only because of the content transmitted, but also because of the symbolic mechanisms that reinforce the acceptance of the current structure as the only possible alternative. Thus, popular education emerges as an essential counterpoint to this logic, as it seeks to break with this ideological invisibility and foster the construction of a new hegemony based on social emancipation. See: SCHLESENER, A. **Invisible Shackles: Education and Ideology in the Reproduction of Hegemony**. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, v. 21, n. 66, p. 13-41, 2016.

¹⁷ For Gramsci, dialogic is intrinsically related to the construction of hegemony and the formation of the critical consciousness of the subaltern classes. Different from a unidirectional process of knowledge transmission, dialogic is based on the active interaction between subjects, in which knowledge is collectively constructed through the confrontation of ideas and the active participation of social groups in the formulation of their own worldview. This process is fundamental for the creation of organic intellectuals, individuals who emerge from the popular classes and play an essential role in the articulation of a new hegemony. As Gramsci (2001, p. 15) points out, "[...] every social group, born in the original terrain of an essential function in the world of economic production, creates for itself, at the same time, organically, one or more layers of intellectuals who give it homogeneity and consciousness of its own function, not only in the economic, but also in the social and political field." In this way, dialogic, for Gramsci, is not only a pedagogical method, but a political strategy for the emancipation of the subaltern classes. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

him, "[...] popular education, unlike banking education¹⁸, is not based on the mechanical memorization of contents, but on dialogue and the problematization of reality" (Freire & Nogueira, undated, p. 47). In this sense, Freire argues that "[...] there is no neutral education; every educational practice is political, as it is always at the service of a project of society" (Freire & Nogueira, undated, p. 112), which means that popular education must be committed to the liberation of the oppressed. As Brandão points out, "[...] the radicality of the rebellious culture lies precisely in its counter-hegemonic character¹⁹, in which popular education opposes the ideological domination²⁰ of the dominant classes" (Brandão, 2009, p. 39).

Problem-solving education is thus a permanent effort through which men critically perceive how they are being in the world with and in which they find themselves. If it is not possible to understand them outside of their dialectical relations with the world, if these exist regardless of how they perceive them, it is also true that their way of acting, whether it is this or that, is a function, to a large extent, of how they perceive themselves in the world (Freire, 2011, p. 100).

¹⁸ **Banking education**, a concept developed by Paulo Freire, refers to a teaching model in which students are seen as passive recipients of knowledge, while the teacher assumes the role of the sole holder of knowledge. In this system, learning occurs in a mechanical and hierarchical way, reinforcing oppression and limiting the development of students' critical consciousness. Freire criticizes this approach, stating that it reproduces the dominant ideology and prevents the emancipation of the subjects, because "[...] in the 'banking' conception of education, 'knowledge' is a donation from those who think they are wise to those who think they know nothing" (Freire, 2011, p. 79). In contrast, the author proposes problem-solving education, which values dialogue and the active participation of students in the construction of knowledge, enabling the transformation of social reality. See: FREIRE, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. 60. ed. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 2011.

¹⁹ For Gramsci, the concept of **counter-hegemony** refers to resistance and the construction of a new hegemony that opposes the ideological domination imposed by the dominant classes. While hegemony is established through the imposition of values, beliefs, and cultural practices that guarantee the consent of the masses, counter-hegemony emerges as a movement of contestation, in which subaltern groups develop a critical view of reality and fight for a new project of society. This process does not only occur in the political and economic sphere, but also in the cultural and educational field, where the training of organic intellectuals plays a fundamental role in the articulation of a collective consciousness capable of questioning and transforming the established order. As Gramsci (2001, p. 14) points out, "[...] The struggle for hegemony does not take place only in the economic field, but mainly in the ideological and cultural field, where the decisive battles for the construction of a new society are fought." In this way, counter-hegemony represents a continuous process of dispute and resistance that seeks to break with domination and establish new forms of social organization. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

²⁰ For Gramsci, **ideological domination** is one of the fundamental pillars of the hegemony of the dominant classes, as it operates through the imposition of values, beliefs and conceptions of the world that naturalize the current social structure and guarantee the consent of subaltern groups. Unlike the direct coercion exercised by the repressive apparatus of the State, ideological dominance manifests itself in cultural institutions, education, religion, and the media, shaping the perception of reality in a subtle and effective way. This process prevents the oppressed classes from developing a critical consciousness, keeping them in a position of submission and passive acceptance of the established order. As Gramsci (2001, p. 12) states, "[...] hegemony is maintained not only by force, but also by the consensus that is built through cultural and educational institutions, which disseminate and legitimize the worldview of the dominant class." In this way, ideological domination is an essential mechanism for the perpetuation of hegemony, making the counter-hegemonic struggle a central element for social transformation. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

In this context, popular education presents itself as a fundamental strategy for the political organization of the subaltern classes and the construction of a new hegemony based on social emancipation. As Brandão (2009) points out, popular education not only teaches but also "[...] it learns from the oppressed, recognizing and valuing their knowledge and practices as legitimate forms of knowledge" (p. 73). In addition, he emphasizes that "[...] popular education takes place in the struggle, in the confrontation with the dominant ideology, and not only in the transmission of knowledge" (Brandão, 2009, p. 83), which means that it is a continuous process of resistance and transformation. By articulating theory and practice, this perspective creates spaces of autonomy and resistance, in which the working class can develop its critical consciousness and its capacity for struggle. As Freire states, "[...] when education is not liberating, the dream of the oppressed is to be an oppressor" (Freire & Nogueira, undated, p. 147), which reinforces the need for an educational process that not only denounces injustices but also mobilizes subjects to transform reality.

The concrete possibility of producing a new popular hegemony within class society is the horizon of popular education. The possibility (the utopia? the realizable historical project?) that, as a result of the accumulation of class power, through the progressive organicity of the practices of popular movements and the consequent strengthening of their popular knowledge, a transformation of the social order into a solidary world of equality and justice will be achieved is the horizon that can be seen from the horizon of popular education (Brandão, 2009, p. 34).

The difficulty of the subaltern classes in recognizing their condition stems from the hegemony imposed by the dominant classes, which structure a system of values and beliefs that naturalizes inequality and keeps the exploited groups in a position of passive obedience. As Schlesener (2016) points out, "[...] hegemony is a form of domination (and even enticement) in the context of the class struggle, [...] the mystifying force of ideology allows for a 'consent without consensus', that is, the political game based on the ambiguity of words" (p. 39). In addition, the dominant ideology reinforces the alienation of workers, because "[...] hegemony is sustained not only by the control of material means but by the symbolic production that defines what is legitimate and acceptable in society" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 41). That said, subaltern groups end up internalizing the dominant logic and acting as maneuvering masses, without developing a critical consciousness that makes it possible to break with structural oppression.

Hegemony is sustained not only by the control of material means but by the symbolic production that defines what is legitimate and acceptable in society. Ideology submits without the individual or the group realizing it. The continuous assimilation of information presented as absolute and universal truths is fundamental for the preservation of hegemony, decisively altering the form and content of the class struggle (Schlesener, 2016, p. 91).

Consequently, popular education emerges as a means of breaking this alienation, by providing a process of awareness that leads to the understanding of social and political reality. Freire (1979) emphasizes that "[...] If a community undergoes an economic change, for example, consciousness is promoted and transformed into transitive. At first, this awareness is naïve. To a large extent, it is magic. This step is automatic, but the step to critical consciousness is not" (p. 39). Thus, this educational process is essential for individuals to understand the social structure that oppresses them and, consequently, to organize collectively to transform their living conditions. As Brandão (2009) points out, "[...] popular education only generates a first moment of passage from an education for the people to an education that the people create" (p. 34).

The awareness of the totality implies a dialectical process of approximation to reality, reading the world to unveil its organization and the contradictions that are inherent to it. The decoding and problematization of reality in its diversity require a split and a reorganization of knowledge and practices in a new interaction, which configures the transformation of reality, one of the transformations made possible by popular education, yesterday and now (Brandão, 2009, p. 101).

In fact, in addition to individual awareness, according to Santos, *et. al.*, (2024), popular education strengthens social movements and peripheral communities, promoting a collective articulation of the struggle for rights. As Brandão (2009) points out, "[...] popular culture as a starting point, with a work of revision of its traditionally 'dominated' components and towards the production of an organic class culture" (p. 35). That said, this perspective breaks with the traditional view of banking education, which imposes ready-made content, and proposes a dialogical and emancipatory model²¹. According to Freire (1987), "[...]

²¹ For Gramsci, **emancipation** is directly linked to the process of raising awareness of the subaltern classes and overcoming the hegemony imposed by the ruling class. This process does not occur spontaneously, but requires the political and cultural organization of oppressed groups, as well as the formation of organic intellectuals who can articulate a new vision of the world. True emancipation, according to Gramsci, is not limited to the conquest of economic or political rights, but involves the construction of a new hegemony that enables the structural transformation of society. He states that "[...] the emancipation of the subaltern classes will only be possible when they are able to create their own conception of the world, breaking with the dominant ideology and establishing a new moral and intellectual direction" (Gramsci, 2001, p. 14). In this way, emancipation for Gramsci is a collective and dialectical process, which requires the struggle for the cultural, political and social autonomy of the working classes. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

dialogue only exists when we accept that the other is different and can tell us something we do not know" (p. 36).

In this way, collective actions are essential for strengthening the identities of the subaltern classes, as they enable the construction of an alternative political and social project. Popular culture, in this sense, plays a strategic role, as it is through it that the popular classes can reaffirm their identity and resist the cultural domination imposed by capitalism. As Brandão (2009) argues, "[...] It is not only in a transformed society that a new culture and a new man are created. It is throughout the collective process of transforming it, through which the popular classes educate themselves with their practice and consolidate their knowledge with the contribution of popular education" (p. 33). In this way, popular education allows marginalized subjects to stop being just receivers of knowledge and become protagonists in the construction of a new reality.

Therefore, carrying out a work of popular culture with the people means advising them in the task of becoming, by themselves, step by step, capable of being the builder of a new popular culture based on new collective practices. A culture stripped of imposed, foreign, and dominant values, which reflect the logic of the hegemonic pole of society and its vision of life in society (Brandão, 2009, p. 71).

The object of this research is the analysis of popular education as an instrument of emancipation of the subaltern classes, focusing on its role in the formation of critical consciousness and the strengthening of social movements from a Gramscian perspective. The objective is to understand how popular education contributes to the development of the autonomy of historically marginalized subjects and the construction of a new hegemonic project based on popular participation as resistance to the imperatives of the dominant class. As Brandão (2009) points out, "[...] the current starting points of popular education are the creation of a new hegemony, popular culture as a starting point and the participation of popular subjects in social transformation" (p. 34). The question that guides this investigation is: how can popular education act as an instrument of resistance and emancipation of the subaltern classes in the face of the hegemony imposed by the dominant classes?

The relevance of this research lies in the fact that, in the context of growing social inequality and attacks on workers' rights, popular education emerges as an essential tool for social transformation. As Schlesener (2016) points out, "[...] education, culture, religion, ideology, become instruments for the formation of public opinion to achieve a passive consensus" (p. 39). In addition, Freire (1980) states that the radical transformation of the

current system "[...] it will not be and will never be the product of the well-will of the articulators of capitalism and the owners of capital, but rather the product of the struggles of the oppressed for autonomy, emancipation and respect for human rights" (p. 186). Thus, understanding and strengthening popular education is not only an academic necessity but a fundamental resistance strategy for the construction of a more just and democratic society.

METHODOLOGY OF COMPREHENSIVE ANALYSIS: INTERPRETING POPULAR EDUCATION AND SUBALTERN RESISTANCE

Qualitative research is essential for understanding social phenomena, especially when it comes to investigating issues related to education, which in this case is popular education and the resistance of the subaltern classes. This type of approach allows us to capture the subjectivity of the subjects involved, their experiences, and their interpretations of reality. As Minayo (2007) points out, "[...] qualitative research is that which is capable of capturing the meaning that individuals give to their actions and to the social relations in which they are inserted" (p. 21). This characteristic is fundamental for a study that seeks to understand how education can be an instrument of resistance and social emancipation.

Qualitative research answers very particular questions. In the social sciences, it is concerned with a level of reality that cannot or should not be quantified. That is, it works with the universe of meanings, motives, aspirations, beliefs, values, and attitudes. This set of human phenomena is understood here as part of social reality, as human beings are distinguished not only by acting but by thinking about what they do and by interpreting their actions within and from the reality lived and shared with their fellow human beings (Minayo, 2007, p. 21).

The choice of the appropriate method for the investigation is decisive for the validity of the results and for the depth of the analysis. According to Gil (2008), "[...] the methodology of social research must be defined based on the research problem, as different approaches produce different ways of understanding reality" (p. 26). In the case of popular education, it is essential to adopt a methodology that allows direct interactions with the subjects studied, such as open interviews and participant observation – if the object requires field incursion – which is not the case, to ensure that the voices of those involved are heard and analyzed in their social and political context.

The definition of the research method must be directly linked to the problem formulated. Depending on the nature of the question investigated, different approaches will be more appropriate to capture the complexities of the

phenomenon studied. The methodological choice has a direct impact on the validity and reliability of the results obtained (Gil, 2008, p. 26).

Thus, in addition to capturing the subjectivities and interpretations of the subjects, qualitative research allows a deeper immersion in the reality studied. As Minayo (2007) points out, "[...] immersion in the field enables the researcher to understand the dynamic processes of social reality and to identify elements that would not be perceived through quantitative methods" (p. 37). This characteristic makes the qualitative approach particularly suitable for the study of popular education, as it allows us to identify the strategies of resistance of the subaltern classes and to analyze the formation of a critical consciousness.

Added to this, another relevant aspect of qualitative research is its flexibility, which allows the researcher to adapt his instruments and data collection techniques according to the particularities of the field. Gil (2008) points out that "[...] qualitative research does not follow a rigid script, as its main concern is to interpret the actions and discourses of the subjects from their logic and context" (p. 49). This flexibility is essential for a study that analyzes educational practices and awareness processes since such phenomena are not static and change over time and space.

On the other hand, bibliographic research plays a central role in the construction of scientific knowledge, especially when it is a study based on the theory of Antonio Gramsci and his interlocutors. This method allows the researcher to access and interpret a vast set of theoretical materials, ensuring a critical and reasoned approach. As Gil (2008) points out, "[...] bibliographic research is developed from material already prepared, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles" (p. 50). In addition, this approach "[...] allows the researcher to cover a much wider range of phenomena than he could research directly" (Gil, 2008, p. 51), which makes it especially relevant for the investigation of complex concepts such as hegemony and popular education.

The bibliographic research is developed from material already prepared, consisting mainly of books and scientific articles. Its purpose is to put the researcher in direct contact with everything that has been written on a given topic, providing a solid theoretical basis and allowing the construction of a critical analysis. In addition, this type of research allows for a broader coverage of phenomena than direct research (Gil, 2008, p. 50-51).

Thus, the choice of bibliographic research as the main methodology is justified by the theoretical centrality of the investigation, which is anchored in the contributions of

Gramsci and the researchers who study his work. This method allows mapping the academic debate on the subject and identifying different perspectives, enriching the analysis. Minayo (2007) points out that "[...] Bibliographic research is a fundamental stage of scientific work, as it makes it possible to situate the object of study within the accumulated knowledge and guide the researcher in the formulation of hypotheses and in the definition of his theoretical framework" (p. 45). In addition, it enables dialogue between different intellectual traditions, broadening the scope of research and allowing a more in-depth interpretation of the issues investigated.

Bibliographic research is an essential stage in the construction of scientific knowledge. By mapping the knowledge already produced on a topic, it allows the researcher to situate his object of study within the academic field and identify gaps, perspectives and ongoing debates. In addition, it enables the articulation between different theoretical references, expanding the capacity for analysis and interpretation of social phenomena. In this way, bibliographic research is not only a survey of information, but a critical and reflective process that guides the formulation of hypotheses and the theoretical development of the research (Minayo, 2007, p. 45).

In view of this, another relevant aspect of bibliographic research is its ability to cover a wide range of phenomena without the need for direct incursions into the field. This is especially important when it comes to theoretical or historical studies, in which the knowledge accumulated by other researchers becomes the main source of data. As Gil (2008) points out, "[...] the main advantage of bibliographic research lies in the fact that it allows the researcher to cover a much wider range of phenomena than that which he could research directly" (p. 51). In the case of this study, this approach enabled an in-depth analysis of popular education and the resistance of the subaltern classes from a Gramscian perspective, without the need for fieldwork.

In time, bibliographic research also allows a dialogue between different authors and perspectives, promoting a more complex and comprehensive understanding of the investigated theme. In addition, it avoids the limitation imposed by isolated sources, ensuring that the information used is collated and critically analyzed. Minayo (2007) states that "[...] a well-conducted bibliographic research must be critical and comparative, in order to avoid the mere reproduction of discourses and to build a reflective and reasoned analysis" (p. 36). Thus, this method allows the researcher to identify contradictions, gaps, and relevant contributions in the existing literature, promoting a more dynamic and in-depth understanding.

Bibliographic research is a fundamental practice in the construction of scientific knowledge. Its objective is to situate the researcher within the state of the art of a given field of knowledge, allowing him to understand the main theoretical currents, the most relevant debates and the existing gaps. More than a data survey, bibliographic research enables the construction of a critical look at the existing literature, avoiding the simple reproduction of discourses and favoring the formulation of new research questions. Thus, by integrating different perspectives and intellectual traditions, this method allows the researcher to broaden the understanding of the phenomenon studied and establish theoretical connections that enrich the analysis (Minayo, 2007, p. 46).

Thus, the choice of bibliographic research for this study reflects the need for a method that enables the articulation between theory and practice, ensuring a methodological approach consistent with the investigated problem. As Minayo (2007) points out, "[...] social research cannot do without a solid theoretical framework, since it is from this that analytical categories capable of interpreting the reality studied are constructed" (p. 46). In this way, this perspective not only underpins the analysis, but also contributes to the construction of critical and transformative knowledge about popular education and the resistance of the subaltern classes.

Comprehensive analysis, on the other hand, seeks to interpret social phenomena based on the articulation between the meanings attributed by the subjects and the structural conditions that shape them. In the context of Antônio Gramsci's writings, the understanding of popular education requires the consideration of the relations of hegemony and counter-hegemony, since the author highlights that "[...] every social group that comes to dominate must necessarily organize its hegemony over society" (Gramsci, 1981, p. 51). Thus, education cannot be seen only as an instrument of the dominant classes, but also as an arena of ideological dispute, in which the popular sectors build counter-hegemonic alternatives.

Minayo (2002; 2006), making a dense reflection on the dialogue between hermeneutics (comprehension) and dialectics (criticism), brings us principles that can serve as a beacon for the operationalization of the method of interpretation of meanings. Among these principles, we highlight that, in order to interpret our data, it is necessary to: (a) seek the internal logic of the facts, reports and observations; (b) situate the facts, reports and observations in the context of the actors; (c) to produce an account of the facts in which its actors recognize themselves in it (Minayo, 2006, p. 99).

Therefore, the methodology of comprehensive analysis allows us to capture the depth of social relations by considering not only explicit discourses, but also the underlying sociological structures. Minayo (2006) points out that this approach is based on the

articulation between "[...] the semantic structures (signifiers) and the sociological structures (signified) of the utterances present in the message" (p. 99). This perspective is fundamental to understand how popular education, in Gramsci's view, can act as an instrument for the emancipation of the subaltern classes, breaking with the ideological domination imposed by the hegemonic bloc.

Based on Minayo (2006), we can consider that interpretation consists of relating the semantic structures (signifiers) with sociological structures (meanings) of the utterances present in the message. In this sense, we articulate the surface of the text described and analyzed with the factors that determine its characteristics (Minayo, 2006, p. 90).

By applying this approach to the study of popular education in Gramsci, it is clear that his educational conception is not limited to a passive reproduction of the dominant ideology, but seeks to build forms of resistance and social transformation. The Gramscian concept of "organic intellectual" is central to this process, as it highlights the importance of agents committed to the political and cultural struggle of the popular classes: "[...] organic intellectuals play a crucial role in the articulation and diffusion of a new class consciousness" (Gramsci, 1981, p. 123). In this way, popular education can be seen as a space for leadership training and the development of critical thinking.

That said, comprehensive analysis allows us to interpret Gramsci's thought not only as an abstract theoretical model, but as an analytical instrument for understanding and intervening in educational reality. As Minayo (2006) points out, interpretation in social research must "[...] relate the social structures and discourses analyzed, in order to produce critical and contextualized knowledge" (p. 90). Thus, studying Gramscian writings from this approach makes it possible to recognize popular education as a space for the dispute of meanings, where the struggle for hegemony is manifested both in the contents taught and in the pedagogical relations established.

In order to make an interpretation, in addition to being based on the inferences we were able to make with the results of our research, they also needed a solid theoretical foundation about what we are investigating. From the point of view of the quantitative approach, the application of statistical tests could be a basis for the interpretation of results. We arrive at an interpretation when we are able to carry out a synthesis between: the research questions; the results obtained from the analysis of the material collected, the inferences made and the theoretical perspective adopted (Minayo, 2006, p. 90).

POPULAR EDUCATION AND RESISTANCE: A GRAMSCIAN REREADING TO BUILD EMANCIPATORY KNOWLEDGE

Popular education, under a Gramscian rereading, constitutes a fundamental space for the construction of emancipatory knowledge, capable of breaking with the cultural hegemony imposed by the dominant classes. Gramsci argues that "[...] there is not necessarily a reciprocal opposition between the 'political ruling class' and the 'intellectuals', or even between the 'intellectuals' and the 'subaltern class' [...], as the latter can place itself in the condition of leader" (Fonseca, 2017, p. 113). In this sense, popular education should not be understood only as a process of transmission of knowledge, but as a means of political reorganization of the working classes.

Gramsci perceived the importance of education in the context of hegemonic relations as a path to the construction of class identity. For the working classes of the early twentieth century, the struggle for hegemony necessarily implied making their reading of history, in order to identify themselves as a class and present themselves as a revolutionary political and social project. This is the pedagogical meaning of political organization, which included all educational institutions created in the movement of organizing the class struggle (Schlesener, 2016, p. 19).

Thus, from the Gramscian perspective, popular education emerges as an essential instrument for the resistance of the subaltern classes and the construction of a new hegemony (Santos, *et. al.*, 2024). For the theorist, the struggle for hegemony implies not only a political and economic dispute, but also a cultural and educational clash, in which the working class needs to develop its own conception of the world. As Schlesener (2016) points out, "[...] hegemony is sustained not only by the control of material means, but by the symbolic production that defines what is legitimate and acceptable in society" (p. 41). Thus, popular education, by problematizing reality and offering tools for the construction of autonomous thinking, becomes a space of resistance against ideological domination.

In fact, the resistance of the subaltern classes necessarily involves the creation of organic intellectuals, who, according to Gramsci, play a central role in the construction of a new hegemony. He argues that "[...] being 'national-popular' means adopting the point of view of the 'subaltern class', without this meaning a lowering of scientific activities, but a political process of education of the 'simple'" (Fonseca, 2017, p. 113). In this sense, popular education not only combats the alienation imposed by the dominant classes, but also strengthens the class identity and the capacity for political organization of the workers.

Gramsci distinguishes between the 'traditional intellectuals' and the 'organic intellectuals': the former are the intellectuals (also referred to as 'crystallized intellectuals') who preserve the order dictated by capital, conceive of themselves as beings detached from social antagonism and innovators of socio-historical development; the latter are those linked to the world of production, to proletarian labor and, thus, they are the 'subalterns' themselves or those who defend the point of view of the 'subaltern class' and who act through 'the party of a new type' (Fonseca, 2017, p. 114).

It follows that organic intellectuals, as formulated by Gramsci, play a central role in the struggle of the subaltern classes for emancipation and social transformation. Unlike traditional intellectuals, who reinforce the dominant hegemony, organic intellectuals emerge from the popular strata themselves and work to strengthen class consciousness. As Schlesener (2016) points out, "[...] the objective of moral and intellectual reform, a presupposition of the new hegemony, must start once again from the effective truth of things, that is, from the consciousness and culture of the subalterns" (p. 151). This educational process aims to break with the common sense imposed by the elites and create a new worldview based on the struggle and organization of the working classes.

In this sense, for popular education to fulfill this emancipatory role, it is essential that it be linked to the strengthening of social movements and the formation of leaders committed to social transformation. According to Fonseca (2017), "[...] the broad Gramscian concept of intellectual is that of bringing the (organic) intellectuals closer to the productive force, in its subjective dimension, that is, the proletariat" (p. 114). This means that organic intellectuals do not act in isolation, but are inserted in the concrete struggles of the working class, assisting in the critical interpretation of reality and in the construction of alternatives to the hegemonic model.

In this way, the resistance of the less favored class through popular education is not only a pedagogical process, but also a political and cultural one. As Schlesener (2016) points out, "[...] knowledge is presented, for Gramsci, as an instrument of power and domination for the dominant and as a way of emancipation for the subaltern or dominated" (p. 151). This reinforces the idea that the struggle for knowledge and political education is essential to break with the structures of oppression and enable the autonomous organization of the subaltern classes.

In addition, the construction of a new hegemony through popular education requires the creation of autonomous spaces²² for training and debate, where workers can develop a

²² For Gramsci, **popular education** cannot be subordinated to educational structures controlled by the dominant class, as these reinforce the prevailing hegemony and limit the critical capacity of subaltern groups.

new conception of the world. Gramsci argues that "[...] contestation and rebellion must be educated in a persistent cultural/political action, which will certainly go through an economic-corporative phase, but which is not yet capable of conceiving hegemony and the universe of complex superstructures that compose it" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 151). This process of awareness is essential for the working class to be able to organize politically and dispute the control of spaces of power.

In the struggle for hegemony, the question of knowledge and language is fundamental for the achievement of the intellectual and moral direction of society. Hence the hegemonic force that emanates from the control of the mass media and the formation of a passive consensus; In the context of the globalization of capital and the merger of the great media powers, authoritarian and imperialist control is established in a subtle and almost imperceptible way. Deconstructing this process and generating the conditions for social transformation presents itself as the great challenge that, from Gramsci's writings, involves both the political organization of workers and cultural formation (Schlesener, 2016, p. 19).

In fact, popular education not only combats the alienation imposed by the dominant ideology, but also strengthens the class identity and the capacity for resistance of the popular classes. As Gramsci explains, "[...] the Modern Prince is thus the highest product of a long process through which the working people become a class and become a party" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 151). In other words, it means that the struggle for popular education must be linked to the construction of a political project²³ capable of confronting bourgeois domination and proposing a new form of social organization.

The struggle for the emancipation of the popular classes through popular education requires a continuous process of political and cultural formation. As Schlesener (2016)

Thus, popular education requires the creation of **autonomous spaces**, where workers can develop a new conception of the world, free from the ideological influence imposed by the State and traditional institutions. These spaces must enable the formation of organic intellectuals, individuals who emerge from the working class itself and play a fundamental role in the construction of a new counter-hegemonic hegemony. As Gramsci (2001, p. 15) points out, "[...] the autonomous organization of the subaltern classes is essential for them to be able to build their own vision of the world, breaking with the values and norms imposed by the dominant class." In this way, popular education, by moving away from traditional models and taking root in the needs and experiences of the working class, becomes an essential instrument for emancipation and social transformation. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

²³ For Gramsci, **popular education** must be **linked to the construction of a political project**, because the educational process is not neutral, but rather a field of ideological dispute. Education, by forming consciences, can serve both to maintain the dominant hegemony and to build a new hegemony that favors the subaltern classes. In this sense, popular education needs to be linked to an emancipatory political project, which enables the formation of a critical and collective consciousness, essential for social transformation. As Gramsci (2001, p. 12) points out, "[...] all education is political, as it involves the transmission and assimilation of conceptions of the world that shape the action of subjects in society". Thus, popular education must be an instrument of struggle, articulated with the interests of the working class, and contribute to the construction of a new social order based on autonomy and justice. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

explains, "[...] the education of the working classes assumes great importance as a path to autonomy and class identity" (p. 149). This means that popular education cannot be reduced to a simple pedagogical tool, but must be understood as a means of constructing a new conception of the world, in which subaltern subjects can develop a critical consciousness and act collectively in the transformation of society.

In addition, Gramsci emphasizes that the construction of alternative hegemony must start from a new language and new symbols²⁴, which express the values and interests of the working class. As he states, "[...] a new hegemony requires the construction of a new scientific language, a new way of relating to the external world, a new set of symbols" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 19). Thus, popular education has the challenge of creating learning spaces that enable the reinterpretation of reality from the perspective of the oppressed, since the struggle for hegemony passes through language:

In the struggle for hegemony, language is an instrument for the unification of a national will and this work is done by intellectuals. The tendency to form an elite distant from the people makes it difficult for the ruling classes to maintain hegemony. In general, with the development of capitalism and the introduction of new technologies of mass communication, as well as with the subordination of communication agents to the companies that employ them, the problem has largely been solved. The production of a mass culture consumer market (cinema, soap operas, bestsellers, etc.) sediments hegemony from the formation of a homogeneous thought, which translates into behaviors appropriate to the objectives of hegemony (Schlesener, 2016, p. 111).

The resistance of the working class through popular education is not limited to individual learning, but requires the formation of a politically conscious and organized collective. Gramsci emphasizes the importance of the formation of a new political culture for the overcoming of subordination, stating that "[...] contestation and rebellion must be educated in a persistent cultural/political action" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 151). This action does not occur spontaneously, but must be built on the basis of educational practices that

²⁴ For Gramsci, the **construction of an alternative hegemony** must start from the creation of a **new language and new symbols**, since the dominant hegemony is maintained not only by political and economic control, but also by the imposition of a set of meanings that naturalize the current order. Thus, in order for the subaltern classes to break with this domination, it is necessary to elaborate a new culture, based on symbols and discourses that express their worldview and strengthen their collective identity. As Gramsci (2001, p. 14) points out, "[...] The struggle for hegemony does not only take place in the economic field, but also in the cultural and ideological sphere, where the meanings and values that guide society are disputed". Thus, a new hegemony requires the replacement of the symbols and narratives of the ruling class with expressive forms that represent the aspirations of workers, creating a new common sense that drives social transformation. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

articulate theory and practice²⁵, allowing workers to develop a deep understanding of the structures that oppress them and the means to overcome them.

In fact, popular education, when understood from the perspective of Gramscian theory, reveals itself as a powerful instrument of resistance and social transformation. As Schlesener (2016) concludes, "[...] the school is a privileged terrain for the dominant classes in the sense of preserving their ideology [...]. But the school is also a space of contradictions [...]; knowing and making explicit these contradictions is a fertile path for the elaboration of a new knowledge about our historical reality" (p. 182). Thus, the struggle for popular education is not only a pedagogical demand, but a central element in the construction of a new society, based on social justice and the emancipation of the oppressed.

Thus, for popular education to be an effective instrument of resistance, it is necessary that it be articulated with organic intellectuals, who, according to Gramsci, have the role of building a new hegemony. As he emphasizes, "[...] being 'national-popular' means adopting the point of view of the 'subaltern class', without this meaning a lowering of scientific activities, but a political process of education of the 'simple'" (Fonseca, 2017, p. 113). Thus, the political education of workers should not be merely technical or schooling²⁶, but a critical process that enables them to understand their own position in society.

If the effective reality is thus manifested, everything becomes clearer in the enormous challenge that lies ahead of the processuality that will be directed towards the emancipation of human labor. It will take a mass of intellectuals

²⁵ For Gramsci, **educational practices that articulate theory and practice** are fundamental for the construction of a critical consciousness and for the formation of subjects capable of transforming social reality. He criticizes the traditional separation between theoretical knowledge, restricted to the elites, and practical knowledge, associated with the working classes, as this division reinforces the hegemony of the dominant class. To break with this logic, it is necessary to have an educational model that unites reflection and action, allowing students to understand the structures that shape their social condition and develop strategies of resistance and transformation. As Gramsci (2001, p. 25) states, "[...] knowledge cannot be an isolated element of practice, but must be integrated into the historical process of struggle of the subaltern classes." In this way, popular education must promote dialectical learning, in which theory illuminates practice and practice redefines theory, ensuring a teaching committed to social emancipation. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

²⁶ For Gramsci, the **political education of workers should not be merely technical or schooling**, because the simple transmission of technical skills is not enough for the emancipation of the subaltern classes. He argues that education must go beyond formal and instrumental teaching, promoting the formation of a critical consciousness that allows workers to understand the structures of domination and actively participate in the struggle for the construction of a new hegemony. The separation between technical knowledge and political consciousness serves the interests of the ruling class, as it prevents workers from developing a broad vision of social reality and the possibilities of transformation. As Gramsci (2001, p. 34) states, "[...] it is not enough for the worker to acquire technical skills; it is necessary for it to understand the role it plays in society and to organize itself politically to transform its condition." In this way, popular education must articulate theory and practice, ensuring that learning is always linked to the struggle for autonomy and social justice. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

organically linked to the historical interests of the world of work, placed in a way that is antagonistic to the world created by the bourgeoisie. A new hegemony requires the construction of a new scientific language, a new way of relating to the external world, a new set of symbols (Schlesener, 2016, p. 91).

In this sense, the construction of alternative hegemony depends on the strengthening of collective actions and the creation of autonomous spaces for education. According to Gramsci, "[...] the education of the educator reappears in the function of the State and, mainly, in the importance for the subaltern classes to train their own intellectuals and to make an inventory of their history, in order to overcome the fragmentation of their conception of the world" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 151). This process requires a continuous effort to organize and create knowledge networks that can oppose the cultural domination imposed by the ideological apparatuses of the State.

In fact, the relevance of popular education, therefore, lies not only in the transmission of formal contents, but in the possibility of constructing a new conception of the world based on the experiences and needs of the working classes. As Gramsci explains, "[...] a new hegemony requires the construction of a new scientific language, a new way of relating to the external world" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 19). Education, by assuming this role, becomes one of the main instruments in the fight against alienation and subordination.

In this way, Gramscian popular education is not reduced to a pedagogical method, but is configured as an essential political practice for the construction of an alternative project to the dominant model. As Schlesener (2016) emphasizes, "[...] thinking autonomously and expressing ideas clearly has great significance in the political struggle" (p. 151). This demonstrates that the educational process is, above all, a space of ideological dispute, where it is decided not only what is learned, but also who this knowledge serves.

Contestation and rebellion must be educated and educated in a persistent cultural/political action, which will certainly go through an economic-corporative phase, but which is not yet capable of conceiving hegemony and the universe of complex superstructures that compose it. This process is confused with the elaboration of a mass of intellectuals who emerge from the very class that is being built and therefore organic intellectuals, in the words of Gramsci (Schlesener, 2016, p. 151).

From the fragment of the text above, we confirm that the formation of organic intellectuals within the subaltern class is an essential factor for resistance to the

impositions of the dominant hegemony. Gramsci distinguishes between traditional²⁷ and organic intellectuals, emphasizing that the former act in the maintenance of the current order, while the latter emerge from the very bosom of the working classes and play a central role in the struggle for social transformation. As Gramsci points out, "[...] organic intellectuals are those linked to the world of production, to proletarian labor and, thus, they are the 'subalterns' themselves or those who defend the point of view of the 'subaltern class' and who act through 'the party of a new type'" (Fonseca, 2017, p. 114). This process of intellectual formation, as he states, does not occur spontaneously, but requires a continuous work of political and educational organization.

GRAMSCI AND POPULAR EDUCATION: SEEKING EMANCIPATORY ALTERNATIVES

The Gramscian conception of popular education for the subaltern classes is intrinsically linked to the process of building hegemony and the need for an education that allows the critical understanding of reality and the political organization of the masses. For Gramsci, education cannot be reduced to a technical instrument for the reproduction of knowledge, but must be a path to social emancipation, in which workers become aware of their condition and capacity for transformation. As Gramsci states, "[...] the first emancipation from political and social servitude is that of the spirit" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 643). In addition, he states that "[...] pedagogical history shows that each class that has prepared itself for the conquest of power has become fit through an autonomous education" (Gramsci, 1980, p. 642).

Education and emancipation are concepts that, in the context of historical materialism, should be analogous or linked in a relationship of similarity and completeness: education should always be emancipating. Even within the limits of capitalist society, the subaltern classes cannot give up formal education, simply because, in order to face the struggle for hegemony, they need to understand the forms of domination to which they are subjected, and this is only possible through access to historically produced knowledge (Schlesener, 2016, p. 172).

²⁷ For Gramsci, **traditional intellectuals** are those who present themselves as neutral and independent in relation to social structures, but who, in reality, play a fundamental role in maintaining the hegemony of the dominant class. These intellectuals, who include professors, clergy, jurists, and academics, often perpetuate the dominant ideology rather than question it, reinforcing the stability of the capitalist system. According to Gramsci (2001, p. 8), "[...] Traditional intellectuals tend to see themselves as an autonomous and independent category, but in fact they perform a function of conserving the existing order, serving the interests of the ruling class." Thus, unlike **organic intellectuals**, who emerge from social struggles and seek to transform reality, traditional intellectuals act in the reproduction of the status quo, ensuring the continuity of the current hegemony. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

Popular education, from the perspective of Antonio Gramsci, is an indispensable factor for the resistance of the subaltern classes against the ideological impositions of the ruling class. Social emancipation depends on the formation of a critical consciousness, capable of understanding the mechanisms of domination and transforming reality. As Gramsci argues, "[...] the school should allow workers to acquire not only technical knowledge, but a broader conception of the social structure, so that they can actively intervene in the transformation of reality" (Gramsci, 2001, p. 152). This shows that education is not only a means of transmitting knowledge, but a space for the dispute for hegemony, being essential for workers to be able to elaborate their own conception of the world.

Furthermore, the importance of popular education lies in its ability to form organic intellectuals, that is, subjects from the subaltern classes themselves who can contribute to the construction of a new hegemony. Unlike traditional intellectuals, who serve to maintain the *status quo*, organic intellectuals play an active role in the political organization of workers and in the formulation of a new popular culture. According to Gramsci, "[...] no ruling class can maintain its rule by force alone; it needs to win the adhesion of sectors of society through an ideological consensus that must be built from childhood" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 25).

The resistance of the subaltern classes, however, cannot be limited to the theoretical field; It is necessary that education be linked to the daily practice and concrete conditions of the workers' lives. Gramsci emphasizes that critical consciousness can only be developed in the midst of active processes of social transformation, in which workers are protagonists. As he states, "[...] educating oneself for the struggle means becoming aware of one's own conditions of existence and transforming them through organized collective action" (Brandão, 2009, p. 47). This means that knowledge must be built from concrete experience, connecting theory and practice to foster learning that contributes to the political struggle.

That said, the instrumentalization of education by the dominant classes reinforces conformism and alienation, making it essential to create alternative learning spaces that stimulate the intellectual autonomy of the subaltern classes. These spaces can manifest themselves through popular schools, study groups, culture circles and other initiatives aimed at political education. As Freire emphasizes, "[...] education cannot be neutral; either

it serves the liberation of the oppressed or the maintenance of oppression" (Freire & Nogueira, 1989, p. 102).

Thus, popular education, for Gramsci, must be inserted within a broader political project of the subaltern classes. He emphasizes that the formal school, although marked by the limitations imposed by the bourgeois state, cannot be ignored by the working classes. On the contrary, it must be critically appropriated as a space for the dispute of meanings and contents. As he endorses, "[...] even within the limits of capitalist society, the subaltern classes cannot give up formal education, simply because, in order to face the struggle for hegemony, they need to understand the forms of domination to which they are subjected, and this is only possible through access to historically produced knowledge" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 930). In addition, he reinforces that education "[...] it must allow workers to overcome the fragmentation of their thinking, understanding themselves as a social class" (1982, p. 1366-8).

When addressing the various possibilities experienced by modern pedagogies, the basic question is 'to create a type of school that educates the instrumental classes and subordinated to a leading function in society', that is, it is a matter of forming a collective and not just developing some individual capacity (Q. 9, p. 1183). Thinking about collective education implies emphasizing the political character of the educational process and the importance, for the subaltern classes, of universalizing acquired knowledge, so that they can overcome the fragmentation of their way of thinking (Q. 11, p. 1366-8). And, above all, to understand that the school is one of the spaces of critical formation, to the extent that the philosophy of praxis or dialectics, as a methodology and criterion for interpreting reality, make this type of formation possible (Gramsci, 1982, p. 1366-8).

Thus, according to the text, the Gramscian conception of popular education highlights the need for a political project that allows the subaltern classes not only to understand their social condition, but also to act actively in the transformation of reality. The school, although traditionally controlled by the bourgeois state, can be a space of dispute and resistance, as long as it is critically appropriated. As Schlesener points out, "[...] the school has a function in the context and limits set by the instituted society, but considering the correlation of forces that characterizes the construction of hegemony, one can try to make the school a possible space for questioning reality and searching for new meanings" (Schlesener, 2016, p. 21). This shows that, even within the limits imposed by capitalism, education can be an instrument of struggle and organization for the working classes.

That said, for popular education to fulfill this role, it is necessary for workers to appropriate knowledge collectively, overcoming the fragmentation imposed by the social

division of labor²⁸. Gramsci points out that the struggle of the subaltern classes for hegemony involves the formation of organic intellectuals, capable of elaborating critical thinking based on the concrete experience of the oppressed. He states that "[...] the knowledge historically produced must be appropriated by the working classes, because without it it is not possible to understand the forms of domination and structure an effective resistance" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 1366-8). Collective training, therefore, is not only a pedagogical strategy, but a political necessity for workers to build their own project for society.

The school, in this context, cannot be reduced to a space for the reproduction of dominant knowledge, but must be restructured to allow the development of a critical consciousness. According to Gramsci, "the school needs to change its structure, contents and methods, to create the conditions for the student to recognize his cultural roots and the values that transcend his time, in order to understand his insertion in the world" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 1366-8). This implies not only the inclusion of new content, but the transformation of the relationship between educators and students, promoting active and participatory learning.

The construction of a new hegemony, based on the interests of the subaltern classes, requires a teaching method that not only informs workers about their condition, but enables them to intervene in reality in an organized way. As Gramsci emphasizes, "education cannot be separated from political practice; it must prepare workers to act as historical subjects, capable of constructing their own conception of the world" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 1183). This process involves the development of a new political culture, which breaks with the ideological subordination imposed by the dominant classes and enables the construction of alternatives to the current model.

In addition, the resistance of the subaltern classes depends on the mastery of language and the ability to articulate a discourse of their own, which counters the dominant narrative and strengthens the collective identity of the workers. Gramsci argues that "[...]

²⁸ For Gramsci, the **social division of labor** is not only a technical separation of productive functions, but an instrument for **maintaining the hegemony** of the dominant class. He argues that this division creates a hierarchy between manual labor and intellectual labor, restricting workers to performing tasks without allowing them to develop a critical understanding of the system that oppresses them. This separation reinforces alienation and prevents workers from taking an active role in the formulation of a new political and social project. As Gramsci (2001, p. 17) states, "[...] the division between manual and intellectual labor corresponds to a social structure that limits the rise of subaltern groups, perpetuating their condition of domination." Thus, overcoming this division is fundamental for the construction of a new hegemony that integrates theory and practice in the formation of a critical and emancipatory consciousness. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

hegemony is consolidated by the formation of passive consensus, and this power of the dominant classes has been expanded in an unusual way with the insertion of new communication technologies" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 1050). Thus, to confront this domination, popular education must provide workers with tools to critically interpret information, deconstruct ideological discourses and elaborate an autonomous vision of reality.

In time, mere participation in formal education is not enough. It is necessary to create alternative spaces for training, where workers can develop autonomous and critical thinking. Gramsci points out that the construction of a new hegemony requires not only the production of new knowledge, but also the construction of organic intellectuals who act as mediators between the popular classes and social transformation. "In *the Prison Notebooks*²⁹, the education of the educator reappears in the function of the State and, mainly, in the importance for the subaltern classes to train their own intellectuals and to make an inventory of their history" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 643).

Thus, the education of the subaltern classes must, therefore, be anchored in the dialectic between theory and practice, avoiding the simple reproduction of dominant knowledge and promoting the formation of a collective consciousness. Gramsci argues that "[...] knowledge presents itself as an instrument of power and domination for the dominant and as a way of emancipation for the subaltern or dominated" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 643). In this sense, he points out that "[...] popular education must create a type of school that educates the instrumental classes and subordinated to a leading function in society" (Gramsci, 1980, p. 1183).

In practice, Gramscian popular education requires the creation of collective spaces for reflection and action, such as study groups, independent publications, and pedagogical initiatives aimed at the political education of workers. Gramsci himself was involved in the creation of newspapers, magazines and schools of political training, recognizing the importance of the organization of the working class in the educational process. He

²⁹ The **Prison Notebooks** are a collection of writings produced by **Antonio Gramsci** between 1929 and 1935, while he was imprisoned by the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini. In this work, Gramsci develops his main reflections on **hegemony, intellectuals, education, culture and the State**, formulating an essential theoretical framework for understanding power relations in society. The texts were not organized in a linear structure, but were written as notes and fragments, addressing themes such as cultural hegemony, the concept of organic **intellectual**, civil society, and the struggle of the subaltern classes. As Gramsci (2001, p. 5) points out, "[...] The struggle for hegemony takes place not only in the political and economic field, but mainly in the cultural and ideological sphere, where the values and conceptions that guide society are defined." The posthumous publication of the *Cadernos* consolidated Gramsci as one of the most important Marxist thinkers of the twentieth century, influencing several areas of knowledge, especially education, sociology and political science. See: GRAMSCI, A. *Prison Notebooks*. Rio de Janeiro: Civilização Brasileira, 2001.

emphasizes that "[...] the party school should be composed of pamphlets dealing with the elementary questions of Marxism, explaining the concrete conditions of economic and political reality" (Gramsci, 1982, p. 643). It is also highlighted that "[...] the relative success of the school of *L'Ordine Nuovo*³⁰ in 1920 can be explained by the link between movement and educational process, whose strongest implication is the possibility of the educator being educated by movement" (Del Roio, 2006, p. 322).

CONCLUSION

From the Gramscian rereading of popular education, it was possible to understand that this educational model transcends the simple transmission of knowledge, configuring itself as a political process of construction of a new hegemony. Popular education, far from being a passive mechanism, emerges as an essential tool in the emancipation of the subaltern classes, allowing popular subjects to recognize themselves as protagonists of history and, thus, reconfigure their own trajectories.

Throughout this research, it was evidenced that the hegemony of the dominant classes is sustained not only by the means of production, but also by the ideological control exercised through formal education. Gramsci (2001) argues that the traditional school plays a crucial role in maintaining passive consensus, as it shapes conceptions of the world in a way that reinforces existing social hierarchies. In this way, popular education, by operating in a counter-hegemonic manner, becomes a space for resistance and construction of new meanings, breaking with the imposition of "invisible shackles" that naturalize subalternity (Schlesener, 2016).

One of the main findings of this research was the finding that popular education is intrinsically linked to the formation of organic intellectuals. These intellectuals, according to Gramsci (2001), are not dissociated from the popular classes, but emerge from within them, playing a fundamental role in the articulation of a new collective consciousness.

³⁰ **L'Ordine Nuovo** was a newspaper founded in 1919 by **Antonio Gramsci**, Palmiro Togliatti, Angelo Tasca and Umberto Terracini, in Turin, Italy. Initially, the publication aimed to disseminate socialist ideas and discuss labor issues, especially related to the organization of **factory councils**, which Gramsci saw as embryos of a new socialist society based on the direct participation of workers. Over time, the newspaper became an essential space for the formulation of his political theory, addressing topics such as **hegemony, proletarian revolution and popular education**. As Gramsci (1978, p. 45) pointed out, "[...] the factory councils represent not only a form of workers' organization, but an instrument for the transformation of society, breaking with the traditional structure of the bourgeois state." **L'Ordine Nuovo** was one of the main vehicles of the Italian revolutionary left in the post-World War I period and played a crucial role in shaping the ideas that Gramsci later developed in *the Prison Notebooks*. See: GRAMSCI, A. *L'Ordine Nuovo (1919-1920)*. Torino: Einaudi, 1978.

Popular education, in this sense, should promote an integration between theory and practice, allowing students to understand not only the formal contents, but also the power relations that shape their lives.

Another central aspect observed was the importance of dialogue as an essential method in popular education. In line with Paulo Freire's ideas, educational practice should be participatory and problematizing, allowing students to critically reflect on their reality and take ownership of their role in social transformation. Education should not be an instrument of submission, but of emancipation, where the dialogical relationship enables popular subjects to construct new meanings for their lived experiences (Freire, 2011).

The survey also revealed that the struggle for popular education is linked to the dispute for a new political and social project. As Gramsci (2001) emphasizes, the construction of a new hegemony requires the formulation of an educational model that overcomes the fragmentation of workers' thinking and promotes a conception of the world that is more coherent with their historical interests. This implies the formation of autonomous spaces of education, in which subaltern subjects can develop their own narrative and build strategies of resistance.

Another relevant point discussed was the need to rethink the relationship between education and work. The social division of labor, by separating theoretical knowledge from practical knowledge, reinforces the alienation of the popular classes. Gramsci (2001) proposes that education should be able to articulate knowledge and practice, allowing workers to understand their own economic and social reality. This approach is in line with the proposal of popular education, which seeks to break with the dichotomy between manual and intellectual work, promoting an integral and emancipatory education.

Throughout this investigation, it was evidenced that popular education is a field of ideological dispute, where different conceptions of the world are confronted. If, on the one hand, traditional education aims at the reproduction of relations of domination, on the other hand, popular education is constituted as a space of resistance, which seeks the transformation of social structures. In this way, it is reaffirmed that popular education cannot be understood only as a pedagogical method, but as a strategic instrument in the struggle for a more just and egalitarian society.

In view of the results obtained, it is concluded that Gramscian popular education is a powerful way for the emancipation of the subaltern classes, as long as it is articulated with a political project of social transformation. To this end, it is necessary to strengthen popular

education initiatives, investing in the training of organic intellectuals and in the creation of autonomous teaching spaces. Only through critical and liberating education will it be possible to break with the shackles of subordination and build a new hegemony based on popular participation and social justice.

In view of this, the research points to the need to expand studies on popular education from a Gramscian perspective, exploring new strategies for political education and social mobilization. Popular education, by promoting the awareness and organization of historical subjects, reveals itself as an indispensable instrument in the construction of a more equitable and solidary future.

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