Experience Report

Teacher training: Art as an intercessor in the experimentation of other ways of thinking

Estágio de docência: a arte como intercessora na experimentação de outras maneiras de pensar

Ana Paula Crizel[1]; Aline Rodrigues[2]; Angélica Vier Munhoz[3]
Centro Universitário UNIVATES, Lajeado, RS, Brazil

Abstract

This text reports the experience of teacher training in higher education conducted by the Graduate Program in Teaching of the Department of Pedagogy at Univates, Brazil, along the first semester of 2014. The authors consider art as an important intercessor to think about curriculum and discourses in education and teaching. The art that has been blended with the contents studied in disciplines such as Curriculum Studies and Differences and Multiplicities is the art experienced by Nietzsche, art that is immanent to life and committed neither to beauty nor to ugliness, neither to methods nor to techniques. An art that favors sensitive encounters and potentializes life. In the first section, we present the focus of this paper, i.e., two trainings that have Pedagogy as a course, and art as an intercessor. The understanding of art by authors from the field of Philosophy of Difference is developed in the second section. The third section of this paper is divided into two parts, and presents experimentations performed in each one of the curriculum trainings.
Keywords: Art, Pedagogy, Teaching, Movement.

Resumo

Este texto relata a experiência do estágio de docência no Ensino Superior do Mestrado em Ensino do Centro Universitário UNIVATES, Brasil, que ocorreu no primeiro semestre de 2014 no curso de Pedagogia da instituição. As autoras aproximam-se da arte como importante intercessora, provocando movimentos para pensar o currículo e os discursos em educação e ensino. A arte que se misturou aos conteúdos de estudo das disciplinas *Estudos do Currículo* e *Diferenças e Multiplicidades* é aquela vivida por Nietzsche, uma arte imanente à vida, que não possui compromissos com o belo e o feio, com métodos e técnicas; uma arte que promove encontros sensíveis e potencializa a vida. Na primeira seção, apresenta-se a matéria que movimenta este artigo: dois estágios que possuem em comum um curso – o de Pedagogia – e um intercessor – a arte. A compreensão de arte operada pelos autores que percorrem o

[1] Master in Teaching at UNIVATES University Center. Member of the Research Group Curriculum, Space, Movement (CEM/Univates/CNPq). E-mail: ana.crizel@gmail.com

[2] Master in Teaching at UNIVATES University Center, early grade teacher at private schools in the city of Lajeado/RS, and workshop coordinator in teacher training courses. E-mail: aliner@universo.univates.br

[3] PhD in Education; professor at both the Department of Human and Social Sciences at UNIVATES University Center and the Post-Graduation Program - Master's in Exact Sciences Teaching and Master's Program in Teaching. Leader of the Research Group Curriculum, Space, Movement (CEM) - CNPq Research Board. E-mail: angelicavmunhoz@gmail.com

território da Filosofia da Diferença é desenvolvida na segunda seção. O terceiro momento deste artigo divide-se em duas partes, pois apresenta as experimentações desenvolvidas em cada um dos estágios curriculares.
Palavras-chave: Arte, Pedagogia, Ensino, Movimento.

What triggers writing

These lines report two events experienced during the teaching training in higher education carried out by the Master's Program in Teaching at Univates along the first semester of 2014. These experiences have two things in common: the Pedagogy course and art as an intercessor.

Art and pedagogy are two distinct knowledges. The former creates "sensitive aggregates", and the latter, as a science, creates "functions" (DELEUZE, 1992, p. 154), therefore, both are creators. Art and pedagogy - several lines both constitute and cross them. Lines with their own movements creating specific contours, which are more or less flexible, and cross and interfere with one another, thus causing different speeds in their movements. Deleuze (1992, p. 156) would say that "[...] the intercessors are essential", and they can be people, animals, an object, a book, a work of art, something which one appropriates to trigger some movement. This does not mean to follow the other's movement; rather, it is to create one's own movement.

It was in this way that art affected the trainees and caused them to create their own movements to work with the contents of study of the disciplines of *Curriculum Studies* and *Differences and Multiplicities*. Both trainees, who are pedagogues, as master's fellows, conceptually move in and with the Philosophy of Difference[4]. In the class planning, the trainees mingled with the movements of the subjects under study as well as with the group of students, so that such approximation could enable the creation of some movements with art, in order to de-territorialize teaching and trigger thinking. The intention was not to arrive at a homogeneous, true understanding of the curriculum, let alone the appraisal of education. The aim was to cause displacements that could destabilize the truths surrounding the Pedagogy territory and promote the invention, the creation, the fabulation - experimentation of other ways of education and teaching. Art, as a virtual potency, a complex of forces that cross the bodies as a block of sensations (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1992), has become the main intercessor in the experimentation of sensitive movements to experience other ways of thinking and making education in contemporaneity.

In order to make such displacements visible, the first section of this paper shows how the authors understand art from the perspective of the Philosophy of Difference, which speaks for and to them. The other two sections present some fragments of the experiences and experimentations seen along the meetings held in each training period.

[4] Philosophy of Difference, from the philosophical perspective of Nietzsche and contemporary French philosophers, such as Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari and Michel Foucault, has given rise to the thought about multiplicity and difference, in opposition to the platonic thought of representation.

Art as experimentation

There are a number of definitions, conceptions and uses of art, but the art experienced in the trainings has no approximation either to the beautiful or to the ugly, it has neither moral nor marketing appraisal; it is not linked either to a discipline or an academic knowledge, with its techniques and methods; it is not fixed on a painting or a sculpture as a sublime image for contemplation. In the trainings, the art that became matter intertwined with the movements of the disciplines under consideration is the art that Nietzsche (2000, p. 152) experienced and left to us, an art that is inherent to life, an art that "[...] has taught us to look upon life in all its forms with interest and pleasure and to educate our sensibilities so far that we at last cry: "life, however it may be, is good!". In this sense, Zordan (2005) explains how difficult it is to determine what art is, just like the difficulty to explain life. The author claims that

> [...] art can be conceived in so many ways that it shows it does not intend to be true, not even in its definitions. Even though there is no "true" definition of art, we can say that the plan of composition of art is a matter of affects and a surface to becoming. (ZORDAN, 2005, p. 270).

The art experienced in the trainings is regarded as a virtual power affecting the bodies in a way that makes them become others; independently on supports, intensities produce a "block of sensations". According to Deleuze and Guattari (1992), art moves in its plan of composition this block of sensations, a composite of affects and percepts, which are not, respectively, simple feelings and perceptions of a modern, urban man. To the authors,

> [...] percepts are no longer perceptions, they are independent on the state of those who experience them; affects are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those who undergo them. Sensations, percepts and affects are *beings* whose validity lies in themselves and exceeds any lived. They could be said to exist in the absence of man, because man as he is caught in stone, on the canvas, or by words, is himself a compound of percepts and affects. The work of art is a being of sensation and nothing else: it exists in itself. (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 1992, p. 213, authors' emphasis).

Nietzsche (2000, p. 118) claimed, "Art makes the sight of life bearable by laying over it the veil of unclear thinking". Assuming this perspective to think about pedagogy and teaching is a different way to travel around such domains – neither critical nor salvationist, but sensitive. As Rolnik (2006) has suggested sensitive with a vibrating body in composition with what touches, moves and proceeds. According to Zordan (2004, p. 81),

> [...] Expropriated, owned, art is an unowned trance; it does not own anything, but can everything. The arts weave cultural warps, the immutable traces that define the life of a people and their becoming on the surface of the Earth. Manifestation of practices, expression of a composition diverging from that ordered by Nature, art creates ways of life, shows the affects of large and small crowds and expresses the becoming of the Earth.

An art that, by being both intertwined with life and a way of living, encourages us to have another relationship with the Earth itself and the matters that constitute us and update us in forms that make us to recognize ourselves. These forms, in some domains, acquire defined and consistent contours, which can be fabulated and mixed with other matters so that others can become. Art as an intercessor to think about pedagogy and teaching was the movement caused to decalcify truths and promote life, because like Oldenburg (2006, p. 67), we are for an "[...] art that takes its forms from the lines of life itself, that twists and extends and accumulates and spits and drips, and is heavy and coarse and blunt and sweet and stupid like life itself".

With this understanding of art, in this section, we take into consideration the complexity of its warps. Mingled with life, it is an art that we attempted to experience along the meetings of the teaching training - art as a thought-moving intercessor. An art that you "can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with" (OLDENBURG, 2006, p. 69). An art that favors encounters with the sensitive, providing experimentations in the body that forces it to move.

The art about which we have written up here has much to talk about with the concept of experience and experimentation that this paper addresses. Such reported and searched experiences do not resemble the procedures used by either the natural sciences or the modern science. It is an experience of the sensitive, it is rare in times of the sensational and the spectacle (DEBORD, 1997). It is an experience occurring in the wandering availability of vibrating bodies that are sensitive to the matters that mingle with life.

Art as a matter for thinking

Art as experimentation in a curriculum

From a one-semester[5] training that problematized and caused curricular inventions and experimentations, in a complex of sensations inhabiting both the trainee and her students in those meetings on Tuesday evenings, we have taken a fragment related to the movements provoked by and with the work of the Argentinean artist Diana Aisenberg (2015). We used her work as an intercessor to cause displacements in the bodies involved with the matter under study, i.e. the curriculum.

About the matter under consideration, there are several clichés and crystallized truths. *Curriculum*, as an initial topic in a conversation with the students, was defined as a list of contents of a discipline or course; a document that organizes and guides school events. We appropriated those discourses, which are not only rooted in the pedagogy soil, in order to do something different, to denaturalize them, question them, create and invent other enunciations and definitions. According to Silva,

> [...] after the critic and post-critic theories, we can no longer see the curriculum with the same innocence. The curriculum has meanings that go far beyond those to which the traditional theories have confined us. The curriculum is place, spaces, territory. The curriculum is power relation. The curriculum is trajectory, trip, and route. The curriculum is an autobiography, our lives, *curriculum vitae*:

[5] The 60-hour-long discipline called Curriculum Studies is part of the Pedagogy course and was taught along the first semester of 2014, with a group of 19 students.

> in the curriculum, our identities are forged. The curriculum is text, discourse, and document. The curriculum is an identity document. (SILVA, 1999, p. 150, author's emphasis).

If it is in the curriculum that we are constituted, subjectivated, defined in a certain way, then problematizing it means to question our own lives, to question the truths in which we have been formed and formatted. Tomaz Tadeu (2003, p. 40), supported by Foucauldian studies, stated: "[...] the only truth is the one we have created. Truth is something from this world".

Impregnated with this perspective and motivated by the invention of other realities, we approached the artist Diana Aisenberg's works (2015), with her collective work in action since 1997. In this work, in different supports and spaces, the artist asks for the definition of different words that have something to say to art. For the artist, every word says or can say something to art. The words whose definition she looks for are often intimately linked to the context of the request. For instance, we can mention the request for definition of the word *presencia* made to *Parque de la Memoria*[6], in Argentina, on the International Day of Missing Persons.

Why this artist and this work? The trainee had followed the artist's artistic trajectory along the 7th Mercosul Biennial in 2009. Affect. Experience. Intensity. As she experienced the work and was affected by it, she chose to extend her affection to the group of students, who accepted the proposal. By mingling with the artist's work, they were also affected, thus moving curriculum intentions.

The first movement was to present the artist's work, show her work procedure, already described, and propose the invention of other definitions not only of the word *curriculum* but also of others linked to curriculum; the words chosen were *teacher, student, evaluation* and *learning*. The exercise of thinking the "non-thought" was not simple, as we are constantly captured by clichés and moral. After the socialization, the proposal of searching for allies to widen the definitions of the words surrounding the curriculum emerged in the group. Then, we intended to steal the artist's procedure. For Deleuze and Parnet (1998, p. 15), "[...] stealing is the opposite of plagiarizing, copying, imitating or doing like". It is a double capture, i.e. a variation of oneself and the other. With this in mind, we designed an intervention in the classroom by asking for the definition of words that could be situated between *curriculum* and *education*.

The intervention

The first part of the class was devoted to the preparation of the setting in which the intervention would occur. With the available material (paper, cloths, charcoal, pens, paints, strings), we started creating a setting in the classroom that would favor experimentation. Like the artist, we asked for definitions of words from the universe of pedagogy and curriculum within the space in which they come into effect and occur: the classroom. At that moment, we tried to deconstruct that space aiming to decharacterize it by provoking strangeness.

[6] Parque de la Memoria, a memorial located on the banks of La Plata River, comprehends the monument to the victims of State terrorism as well as art and education facilities.

The preparation moment (Figure 1) was a mixture of anxiety and uncertainties because we did not know how "our guests", the students of the discipline of *Processes of Teaching and Learning*, would react to the proposal, since at that moment our roles were intermingled - one could not tell students from professors. We were all involved with and affected by what was happening at that moment.



Figure 1. Preparation[7]

The room was ready. Dim light. A request. We search for. Definitions. Quotations. Memories. Rumors. Histories. Fantasies. Clues. Desires. Related to the words between *curriculum* and *education* (Figure 2). In the background, voices echoed the request. Amidst multiple sensations - What to do? How to do it? Why to do it? - experimentation with no orders, no instructor, no students, no right or wrong, no examination, just experimentation, sensation.

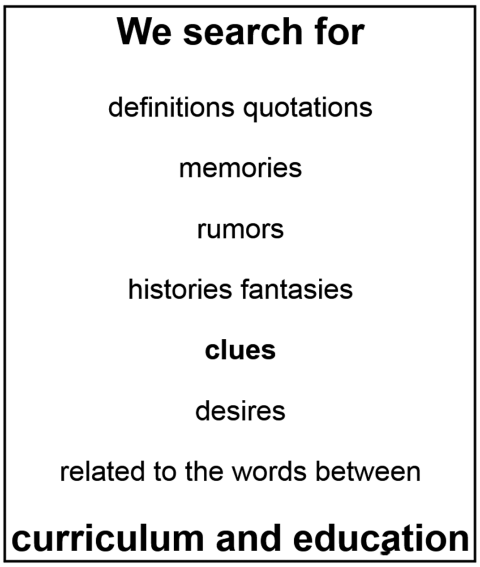


Figure 2. The request

[7] The authors took all the pictures.

In terms of experience (Figure 3), there was no intention to obtain a result or a unique definition of what curriculum was. In terms of desire, the goal was to affect the bodies involved and make the experienced sensations and intensities last. It is not possible to know how each individual was affected, but whatever passes through the body leaves its marks.



Figure 3. The movements

Teaching woven through art

Behind the scenes

Enrolling concluded, the first guidance meeting with the supervising professors already set. An explosion of ideas, paintbrushes loaded, canvases under our arms. Start painting? No, bureaucracy. Forms to fill in, information to provide, rules. Discouragement. Paintbrushes, paints, canvas on the floor. How to proceed? Desire to quit, but we consciously knew it was not possible. What could we do? Try to create in the middle of that bureaucracy, create and go on.

After the first meeting, we held other three with the teachers, besides six classes that should be watched in the group chosen for training and three classes that should be taught. Regarding each class taught on Wednesday evening, everything was directly planned with the professor in charge of the discipline. Forms were filled in and handed in. Organize the toolbox, the easels and the canvases, and open the atelier.

On the scene

In the beginning of the training, in the first class observed, we felt like this (Figure 4):



Figure 4. The arrival

A circle connected to nothing and nobody. When the trainee was introduced, the students showed different expressions. In the second meeting, the relationship was a little better, but with not much proximity. In the following meetings, conversations and play relaxed the group, composed of 12 students.

After the six observations finished, we started the application. Supported by post-structuralist theoretical references, more specifically Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, we used their concepts and displacements to think about teaching and teacher education. In and with art, we searched for potencies to provoke some movements at that moment of the class that could make us think differently about the curriculum and the discourses that permeate the school universe, thus enabling the creation of other territories in education.

During the training, the students and their thoughts about teaching were moved by means of experiences with art, by regarding it as something linked to life. Thus, we tried a mixture in those movements as "[...] an ongoing experimentation aiming at creating itself. A life that increasingly wants to expand itself and create other realities" (TRINDADE, 2013). We did not intend to provide the students with answers in the meetings; rather, we aimed to think with them about possibilities to potentialize teaching and its practices.

Behind the scenes of the training, texts were read and regarded as possibilities of working with the students; dynamics were tried, but nothing caught them. After the presentation of some works by the students, we chose to work on some provocations in terms of art. Why to choose art? Zordan states "[...] art is the active force of the will of potency" (ZORDAN, 2005, p. 267). From this point of view, we proposed a meeting with art as force and potency to the students.

Thinking about art and teacher education as a fusion. Something unexpected. A touch. An experimentation, "[...] bonds, disruptions, there will be moments in which we will unpick our stitches" (KEIL; TIBURI, 2004, p. 14).

During the classes, which we called meetings, the sensations emerged in becomings, in instants; exchanges occurred among the students, the concepts emerged during the paintings, and the teacher's paintbrushes and role ended up mixed with the students'. Relaxation was present, as well as the traces that spotted the white sheets of paper (Figure 5).



Figure 5. Meetings and mixtures

The traces did not often get us anywhere; they neither defined forms - rhizomes? - nor meant to represent anything, just experiment. Concerning the students' availability and this relationship with time, Zordan (2005) says, "[...] the non-chronological art time takes place in the becoming" (ZORDAN, 2005, p. 269).

In this logic of becoming and experimenting, along the training, we problematized teaching by questioning the need of the school organization in disciplines and well-defined times and schedules, in the same way as we problematized the following painting (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Disassembling

Questioning a school that fits or unfits? Pieces that approximate or repel? And what about the subject? Mixed or isolated? Questions that do not demand answers but make us think. Hence, "[...] crossing the plan of composition of art is always a trip, a displacement of views, encounters with strange peoples, affects that can be tried" (ZORDAN, 2005, p. 171).

Trip, view, displacement. Art and life as an aesthetical experience; that encounter between the subject and the world (any existent or inexistent reality) that leads him to a state in which it is only possible to feel; an instant that is established in the body and crosses it; materiality. According to Pereira (2011), not only art can provide aesthetical experiences; the noise of the wind, the walking of a child, the silence can also produce them. For the author,

> [...] an aesthetical experience, in these terms, is similar to the state of mind of the one that falls in love: in the encounter with his or her beloved, a kind of relationship is started, it is not domination, but composition, arrangement, one that displaces a great deal of the references that constituted him or her and projects him or her to a kind of abysm. It is that moment when words fail us to speak, to describe. There is no rational matter to explain what is going on. *Something* starts existing inside me, something that cannot find a recognized path for expression or communication. This *something* appeals to me, asks me to bring it to existence, asks for a body, a materiality, a substrate to exist. (PEREIRA, 2011, p. 116, author's emphasis).

According to Pereira e Farina (2012), in order to have an aesthetical experience, one should be willing to have it. They say that

> The aesthetical attitude and a disinterested attitude, and an opening, willingness, not as much towards the thing or event 'itself' in what it has of consistency, but towards the effects that it has on me, on my perception, on my feeling. (PEREIRA; FARINA, 2012, p. 20).

Aesthetical attitude, willingness to be affected by colors, traces, forms, signs that affect, scents that perfume. Body full of sensations. Time that seems to stop. Endless becoming. Encounter to be experienced (Figure 7).



Figure 7. Singularities

(In)conclusion

Along the training, we wove several lines and questions that moved our thoughts. Every time we entered the classroom, some clichés emerged from the students' discourses: "What we are doing here is not useful in practice", "It is difficult to change the curriculum", "The schools are unwilling", "Theory is nice, but how can we do it at school?" At the end of the training, another recurrent speech in the meetings with the students: "These exchanges are so important, we have evolved a lot with the dynamic classes we had". However, the trainees, moved by the intention to blur some precise contours of the school model invented in modernity, tried to map other forces that could escape from crystallized representations, forces deriving from art.

In the proposed interventions, art was regarded as an intercessor and a trigger, thus creating conditions for an aesthetical attitude (PEREIRA, 2011; PEREIRA; FARINA, 2012) that could potentialize new ways of seeing, living and feeling education, and another relationship with the matters under study: the curriculum and the discourses in education. Art as an attempt to think about pedagogy as being immanent to life, like Deleuze (2006a) has helped us think. Art that provokes the subjects moving through multiplicity, a limited rather than a delimitated space, subjects able to create other images of education and teaching, with evanescent contours, as they do not want fixity, but movement.

In our training experiences, we did not search for measurable results; rather, we sought for results that would create interventions by causing fissures in the pedagogical lines on which we were moving, by blurring concepts that seemed to have been constructed by the students. We realized that the proposed interventions succeeded to make room for the problematization of thought, by displacing the people involved from their positions and enabling disaccomodations and perhaps new compositions. However, the latter escape from our control, as "[...] we never know in advance how someone will learn" (DELEUZE, 2006b, p. 237).

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