Affect as future-making pedagogy: A post-qualitative inquiry in Brazilian primary schools

Paula Albuquerque¹
Magda Pischetola²

Abstract

Educational research shows a growing interest in “affect as pedagogy”, a concept grounded in feminist studies, which focuses on the relationality and materiality of affect. This article addresses the becoming of affect as pedagogy, positioning its inquiry at the crossroads of feminist scholarship and the Deleuzian-Guattarian concept of affect. It presents a post-qualitative inquiry that “experiments with” an agentic assemblage of 76 public schools in Brazil, 78 responses to a qualitative survey, 12 teachers interviewed, and the researchers’ fieldwork observations. The result of this experiment is a collective narrative organized as a Voice without Organ (VwO), which shows interlocking elements of challenging, disadvantaged educational scenarios and a teaching practice traversed by affect. The VwO answers the question of how affect becomes pedagogy, describing events that can be characterized as embodied history, affective labor, and the capacity to be affected. In these events, an intense connection between bodies occurs. This pedagogy also shows the capacity to affect, by creating affirmative desires that materialize in alternative narratives for the students’ futures. In the face of limited and precarious resources, lack of public support, and an environment of violence, affect as future-making pedagogy becomes a means of working against exclusion and social injustice.

Keywords: affect as pedagogy, Deleuze-Guattari, feminist theory, Brazil, post-qualitative inquiry

Introduction

In the last two decades, a growing number of educational theorists have turned their interests in the direction of affect, generating what is known as the “affective turn” (Clough and Halley 2007; Cvetkovich 2012). The affective turn has marked a shift from the tradition of critical studies toward a closer relationship between individual and social experiences and toward the role of affect in historically situated life events (Bozalek and Zembylas 2016). According to Hemmings (2005), the reason for a renewed interest in affect is a dissatisfaction with poststructuralist perspectives on power, which are mainly framed as an analysis of social structures rather than as an understanding of interpersonal relationships. In contrast, theorists of affect focus on “small” narratives (Bardzell 2018) and minor pedagogies (Mazzei 2017) to address “the very fabric of our being” (Hemmings 2005, 549), which is usually left out of constructivist models. By giving relevance to the entanglement of subjectivity with social power relations, they expose the existing gap between

¹ Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, Department of Education.
² IT University of Copenhagen, Department of Computer Science.
what the body feels and what we know of these feelings (White 2017). In this way, emotional states are considered part of shared experiences rather than solely personal and private feelings (Berlant 2004).

In this emphasis on both the relationality and the materiality of affect, several scholars refer to Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1987) and their theorization about the body’s ability to connect, combine, transform, and learn from experience (Hernández-Hernández 2020). Affect, in this sense, is not solely aligned with the emotions but constitutes a force of mutual influence between subjects in their immanent, bodily encounters (Braidotti 2002). Other scholars follow feminist scholarship, which has also had great relevance in affect theory, beginning long before the “affective turn” (Clough and Halley 2007). Feminist studies highlight the influence of objects and matter on human and societal transformation. Matter is considered “mutually constituted” with the discursive (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013) in an entanglement of embodied experiences and socio-cultural forces. The body is acknowledged as “a site of labour, embodied history and political action” (Hickey-Moody and Willcox 2020, 7), where individual experience connects to the material and social environment (Boler 2002) and transforms it.

What these studies have in common is that they value qualitative subjective experiences within the social world, contending that a critique of the present time can be followed by the imagination of a better future (Lindtner et al. 2016). In fact, such a form of affect can afford political change and transformation as it seeks affirmative modes of acting, relating, and existing, creating spaces of social justice and human flourishing. Thus, from the critical perspective that is present throughout the affective turn, affect can be described as a form of “pedagogy” (Riba-Mayoral and Estalayo-Bielsa 2020), a different conceptualization from the more common idea of affect in pedagogy or affective pedagogies. The focus here is on how affect is pedagogical in itself, as it shows a transformative capacity in what is affected (Hickey-Moody and Wilcox 2020), or the potential to “become otherwise” (Pedwell and Whitehead 2012, 116). The emphasis is placed on “the constitutive role affect plays in the production of knowledge and subjects” (Stephens 2015, 274). In fact, affectivity and cognition grow together in constituting subjectivity (Braidotti 2002).

Drawing on the concept of animacies proposed by queer theorist Chen (2012), Niccolini (2016, 232) argues that “affect as pedagogy has animate effects that are unpredictable and lie outside of human forms of agency and control.” Along similar lines, Ahmed (2021) calls pedagogy the process that allows us to learn about institutions and their embedded power structures and thus triggers transformation by opening doors that usually remain closed. However, Ahmed argues, affect does not simply “leap” from one body to another; it “becomes an object only given the contingency of how we are affected. We might be affected differently by what gets passed around” (Ahmed 2010, 39).

When defining affect as pedagogy in the school context, the relationality and materiality of affect acquire a specific texture. On the one hand, the encounter between school actors brings about a “shared responsibility” in articulating the complexity of a classroom and in cultivating pupils’ agency (Miranda and Pischetola, 2020; Zembylas 2019). In this sense, the idea of pedagogy stresses the fact that “it takes effort to bring something into being” (Decuypere 2019, 139) as a result emerging from the entanglement of forces and intensities that operate on a plane of immanence among school actors.

On the other hand, affect as pedagogy focuses on the materiality of the encounter between teacher and learner, where words, bodies, and things are produced together, intertwined and co-constitutive of our embodied subjectivity (Hickey-Moody 2013). Change is materialized, for example, in the relationship between affect and political commitment to social justice in education, or by strengthening an orientation towards equality (Zembylas 2019). Conceiving learning as a material process brings about a focus on ethics, as it concerns affirmative effects of affect (Stewart 2020), meant to increase the capacities of learners’ and teachers’ bodies (Healy and Mulcahy 2020). Affect can contribute to re-imagining not only education but also society as a whole.
This paper builds upon these threads of research into affect as transformative pedagogy, with a special focus on the way affect shapes narratives of the future through the relationality and materiality of the encounter between teacher and learner. In particular, it addresses the way that affect becomes pedagogy, which has not been given much attention in the literature. We are interested in understanding not only how affect in teaching practices relates to social change and transformation in marginalized school contexts—where pupils’ futures seem to be pre-defined by social and cultural settings—but also how and when affect acquires this particular texture of a “pedagogy” in itself. With this objective in mind, we explore the Deleuzian-Guattarian theory of affect as an intensity of the body’s capacity to act (Deleuze 1988, 49) in relation to the feminist concept of affect as pedagogy that is aligned with “difference” in thinking, acting, and knowing (Braidotti 2002).

In our study, we will apply this theoretical frame to the primary school context, taking into account troublesome realities of Brazilian public schools, to explore how teachers increase their capacity for action and embrace affect as pedagogy. Two research questions (RQ) drive the study:

RQ1 How can teachers’ affect become pedagogy?

RQ2 How can affect as pedagogy make a difference in marginalized school contexts?

Empirical research was conducted in the city of Rio de Janeiro between 2018 and 2019 as part of a qualitative research project aiming to study documenting and reflective practices among primary school teachers. Data presented in this paper were selected through the lens of affect as pedagogy and re-interpreted using a post-qualitative inquiry approach (St. Pierre 2014). This perspective proposes to distance itself from predefined scripts of qualitative research to observe things in the making. Jackson (2017, 3) describes the position from which a researcher assumes a feminist approach to allow spontaneity as “the outside of method.” In this process, new concepts arise from in-between relations that are undefined at the beginning and yield insights into the emergence of meanings that are linked up with each other in their “ongoing historicity” (Barad 2003, 821). Over the course of the study presented here, the focus shifted from the initial scope on teachers’ reflective practices to the becoming of affect as pedagogy and the possibility that such pedagogy reframes narratives about the future.

Affect and the Event of Being Affected

The Deleuzian-Guattarian notion of affect (affectus) has to do with the body’s “gain and loss” (Hickey-Moody 2013, 79) of its capacity to act, which moves the individual from one specific state to another. Thus, affect differs from affection, which is feeling or a “state of the affected body” (Deleuze 1988, 49), and it also differs from emotion, which is the disorienting and intimate expression of what has already escaped (Massumi 2002). In these terms, affect is the intense force to act on and through, which is manifested during encounters and connections between bodies. It is what makes the individual body interact with other bodies, objects, or networks, and engage in semiotic, material, and social flows.

This intensity is mutual and bonded, as affecting someone or something has an impact on “opening oneself up to being affected in turn” (Massumi 2015, 110–111). No matter how slight or subtle this transition is, what happens constitutes a “change in capacity” (ibid.). This experience lets us perceive, see, and think of things differently, leading to reconsiderations. That is why Ahmed (2010, 230) defines affect as “sticky” in its capability to sustain the materialized connection between the intellectual and the corporeal. Drawing on this idea, Kuby (2014, 1287) proposes the notion of “sticky emotions” to explain how emotions do not merely reside in individuals, objects, or the social world but are related to cultures, ideologies, and histories.
Therefore, they should be analyzed as performances, that is, in the doing of them and in relation to the relevant assemblage.

In this paper, we address the assemblage of school teachers, students, marginalized school contexts, geography, infrastructure, emotions, and narratives, through the unfolding of a qualitative empirical study in Brazilian primary schools. To do so, we build upon the Deleuzian-Guttarian (1983) concept of “Bodies without Organs” (BwOs), which refers to the way subjectivities are produced in the assemblage. BwOs free our thinking from predetermined frames and rely on material representations to explain enactments. Far from being separated from the object, as in the Cartesian view, or being an inner self, as in Freudian psychoanalysis, subjectivity is conceived as an inorganic space (the BwO) where multiple meanings entangle and stratify (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). A BwO is a collectivity with intensive force (desire) that embraces difference and welcomes becoming, for which it constitutes a field of immanence. As “desiring machines,” collectives rearrange, select, experiment with different processes, and allow newness. As desire is manifested through action, it constantly inaugurates new assemblages as it (dis)organizes others. Therefore, desire defies established norms, and it explores and experiments with effects and affects by mobilizing beings and things. Through its agentic power, desire pushes subjectivity in multiple unprecedented directions, constituting a powerful productive unit, competent to displace and change the social fabric (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2014).

Based on these definitions of desire and affect, Deleuze (1974) proposes that we consider being affected in the form of an “event” that is the result of a relationship and a mixture of bodies, flows, intensities, and transformation; such an event proceeds from the recognition of how those things are entangled in a given assemblage of more-than-human connections (Hickey-Moody and Willcox 2020).

A post-qualitative process of inquiry

Situated context

Brazil is among the ten most unequal countries in the world and has become even more unequal since the emergence of the pandemic (Stevanim 2020). Investment in education accounts for about 6% of GDP (Oliveira 2018), a higher rate than in some OECD countries, but not a high rate from the points of view of social justice and human rights.³

In the municipality of Rio de Janeiro, social and economic discrepancies present an observable and shocking contrast all around the city. The South Zone, for example, is the richest and most developed area, with social development indices comparable to those of Nordic countries, and yet it also hosts the second largest favela of Brazil, Rocinha, which houses about 70 thousand people. Currently, 22% of Rio’s population live in favelas, where health, education, and security conditions are precarious. In these areas, poverty is usually associated with prejudice, discrimination (Ribeiro et al. 2010), and exclusion (Kolinski and Alves 2012).

This situation is worsened by an inefficient school system, which undermines any possible change of status that good schooling could provide (Freitas 2007). In fact, careful examination shows that poor schooling coincides with socially and economically vulnerable locations (Koslinski et al. 2013). An extensive body of studies conducted in public schools reports precarious physical infrastructure, crowded classrooms, and a system that does not encourage a meaningful pedagogical experience (Souza et al. 2017), intellectual reflection, or teacher professional development (Brasilino et al. 2018). In fact, schools do not provide special services,

³ For example, about 30% of Brazilians between 15 and 64 years old are considered functionally illiterate (INAF 2018). That is, they can read but cannot understand or draw basic hypotheses from a simple written text.
such as resource rooms for special-needs students, counseling, or materials that would help minimize the effects of poverty.

Social scientists and educational scholars have highlighted the structural reproduction and legitimation of social and school inequalities (Silva and Soares 2020), even in the context of the recent reform of the national public education curriculum (Furtado and Silva 2020; Girotto 2018). Such a reproduction and normalization of inequalities is said to be part of a larger political objective to provide students in Brazilian public schools with reduced possibilities for social mobility and individual development (Lopez 2020; Pires 2019). The political system is designed to ensure that these students do not succeed; accordingly, it is not expected that they will experience any motivation to learn (Libâneo 2012).

In this context, public school teachers are expected to be the ones to include and motivate students, differentiate activities creatively, use a variety of educational technologies (Santos and Albuquerque 2018), and guarantee meaningful learning (Libâneo 2012). These expectations are built into public policies and guidelines that identify teachers not only as competent in understanding social problems but also as responsible for pupils’ moral and personal development (Andrade and Nascimento 2018). Moreover, teachers are expected to invest their free time and resources in continual professional development, without any impact on their salaries and/or institutional recognition (Pischetola 2014; Rigo and Herneck 2015). In other words, professionalism and personal vocation are constantly intertwined in the political understanding of the teaching profession (Ferreira 2011), with significant consequences for teachers’ overload of responsibilities, often materializing in burnout syndrome (Montoya et al. 2021).

**Research method**

The empirical data this paper draws on was generated in the context of doctoral research pursuing an understanding of the relationship between teachers’ documenting practices and their reflective attitudes. The investigation started from the assumption that reflective documentation is an essential feature of professional development, as it allows teachers to attend to pupils’ specific needs and situated requirements. Thus, any material that teachers used for documenting their practice was explored as a resource for reflection and future improvement of their teaching. The main research question for this study was: How do teachers’ documentation practices relate to reflection? With this purpose, in 2018–2019 we conducted fieldwork in 76 public primary schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro, asking teachers to participate in a qualitative study that would involve completing a questionnaire and participating in a group interview (Albuquerque 2020). Ethical clearance was sought and approved through the Research Ethics Committee at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro, where the research was undertaken (Reference Number: 07/002.161/2018) and followed by the approval of the Ethics Committee at the City Hall’s Education Department. All the respondents completed a written participant consent form before data collection.

At the time of the research, the municipality of Rio de Janeiro counted approximately 1,550 primary schools divided into 11 regional districts, with a total of 39,000 teachers and more than 645,000 students. All the districts were contacted to obtain a list of 10–12 schools to visit in each region of the city. Two selection criteria were applied at this first stage: (1) a higher score for the school’s official performance and (2) the existence in the school of a minimal infrastructure, such as an internet connection. Based on the initial literature review for the research project, we understood that these factors could be related to teachers’ assiduity, communication, and motivation for documenting their own practices. An additional filter applied for selection concerned the researchers’ personal safety. Thus, schools located inside or near favelas were avoided, as were schools located at a distance that could not be covered in a one-day round trip. A
map of the resulting selection of 76 schools, with their distribution over the 11 districts, is provided in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Map of school districts in Rio de Janeiro. Distribution of the 76 schools participating in the study (triangles) and the 9 schools of the 12 teachers participating in the interviews (circles).

At each school visited, we found at least one teacher interested in the research topics and available to complete a questionnaire. At the end of the process, we had 78 valid responses and 45 teachers who had declared their interest in also being interviewed. In the methodology defined for the empirical data collection, the interinstitutional character of the group composition was set as an important objective to guarantee an exchange between the participant subjects and limit any bias due to belonging to the same workplace. Therefore, it was decided that the group interview would take place at the university, to which the teachers were invited. However, due to time constraints and other limitations (such as the geographical distance of some schools from the South Zone, where the university is located), the final number of interview participants was reduced to 12 (by coincidence, six men and six women). These 12 interviewees did not have significant commonalities in background, school district, grade level, age, or professional experience. Aside from the willingness to be further contacted, they had in common only the fact that they had shown, in the questionnaire, a high degree of reflection and self-assessment with regard to their practices. Thus, only six districts out of 11 were represented at this second stage (the schools are represented by circles in Figure 1). Four group interviews were held with three participants each, with a goal of deepening our understanding of teachers’ views about the relationship between documentation and reflective practice. The interviews followed a semi-structured script designed to engage teachers in a set of discursive activities. The script was divided into three main topics: (1) documenting practices; (2) reflective practices; and (3) the role of analog and digital materials in both documentation and reflection. We concentrated on grasping participants’ various views and
conceptions through their interactions with us and with each other. Analysis of the group interview discussion used these three central ideas as an analytical tool for assessing teachers’ answers.

After visiting the schools, analyzing field notes, and transcribing 11 hours of interview recordings, we did find a relationship between documentation practices and pedagogical reflection (Albuquerque 2020; Pischetola et al. 2019). Nevertheless, what particularly caught our attention as we analyzed the data collected was the range of teachers’ testimonies and worries that had little to do with the object of study. Although we did not perceive this result at first, while on-site, the teachers’ stories continued to resonate and find an echo in our previous concerns for marginalized contexts and voices that are mostly ignored.

During the interviews, while trying to connect ideas of reflection and documentation to their own practice, the participants mentioned the importance of students’ feelings in generating motivation. They showed flexibility and adaptability in relation to the material environment and scarce resources, as well as in the face of the lack of basic infrastructure such as computers for pupils, internet broadband, or science labs. To support their teaching, they would often provide students with access to their own mobile internet connection to view an image or answer a quick survey online. They used their own computers, paid for photocopies, brought their own materials to school, and offered extra help after school hours for students willing to apply for scholarships. They also consistently mentioned demotivating factors and “trials of strength” (Sørensen 2009) including lack of recognition, low salaries, and faulty public administration.

As our investigation went on, the pressure of critical, feminist, and Deleuzian-Guattarian studies urged us to revisit the experience that our bodies had registered and the revealed flow of connections. We attempted to create a different “way of thinking” (Colebrook 2002) as we returned to that experience. We looked for what was “kicking back” (Barad 1999, 2), sticking, and taking hold after what had constituted that first starting point of a qualitative analysis.

The investigation took shape as we tried not only to unfold teachers’ practices but also to use the information gathered to look more deeply into processes, events, objects, and narratives that indicated new “lines of flight” (Deleuze and Guattari 2000)—that is, differences in their answers that moved away from “stratified and overcoded lines” (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2014, 766). This included “abandoning meaning whenever possible” to allow some aspects of “liminality and messiness” (Bhattacharya 2020, 524) to emerge in the new inquiry.

The teachers’ documentation practices indeed revealed not only reflection but also affect, understood as Deleuzian affectus, which in turn took the form of a vigilant attitude toward the needs of others, an attitude that required responsibility (Todd 2007) or response-ability (Haraway 2016). Affected teachers showed their affect in the form of transformative pedagogy. But how and when did this happen? How did their affect in relation to the lived situations and contexts become a pedagogy?

For the purposes of this paper, we present the reflections driven by these new research questions in a frame of post-qualitative inquiry, which implies “thinking with theory” (Mazzei and Smithers 2020) to attempt a new starting place for inquiry (Springgay and Truman 2018). This methodological choice was made to stress how returning to the original data allowed us to give value to information it contained that was initially discarded in the application of a structured procedural approach—an approach that permeates qualitative as well as quantitative research methodologies (St. Pierre 2014).

Our return to the original data did not define a new “object” of study but rather an “assemblage,” a concept we use here to name the “multiplicities or aggregates of intensities” (Deleuze and Guattari 2005, 15). From this perspective, concepts do not represent or designate a thing; rather, they relate to doings, beings, changes, and possibilities. According to Jackson and Mazzei (2012a, 1), an assemblage “is the process of making and unmaking the thing, of arranging, organizing, fitting together” within a specific territory, where the connection is created.
In the empirical study presented here, we will (re-)visit the assemblage resulting from participant teachers, their students, their documents and the materials at hand, their workplace, their stories, their circumstantial and institutional realities, the interviews, their interactions with the researchers, and the transcripts, as well as the bodies involved and their changes of state. Through the effort of engaging with this assemblage, we also intend to shift away from the conventional focus of qualitative research on demarcated individual voices. These voices come to present their thoughts and experiences and interact differently in this particular assemblage, which is also animated by our own (the researchers’) embodied memories and emotions. By recognizing ourselves as part of this assemblage, we articulate a unique voice, assembled in the fieldwork and re-evoked through field notes and collected materials. In this way, teachers’ voices became manifestations of a collectivity, resulting from a myriad of encounters and assemblages that include our re-interpretations of situated conversations along the course of the data’s co-creation.

To present such a collective voice, we use Mazzei’s (2013) concept of a “Voice without Organs” (VwO), which is grounded in Deleuze and Guattari’s (1983) concept of a “Body without Organs” (BwO). Thinking with this concept enabled a different conception of how agency is produced and distributed in the assemblage: not as emanating from a singular subject or event, and not as bounded by the binary distinction between the discursive and the material, but rather as emerging from the entanglement of distinct and historically specific actors. Such agency points to an ability to decode and recode temporality, manifested through ongoing discursive formations and cultural practices (St. Pierre 2000, 504). In this sense, it might be seen cartographically as a map that shows multiple possible social and material flows (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2013) that appear during the process of inquiry—a map that also includes economic powers, previous data analysis, theories, questions, and our subjectivities as researchers involved in the study.

In the next section, presentation of the results will follow the categories informed by the theoretical frame, which point to the need to observe the relationality and materiality of affect. In the attempt to answer our research question, we will observe how and when these two aspects intertwine and result in the increase of a “power of acting” (Deleuze 1988, 49) and in the becoming of affect as pedagogy.

The emergence of affect as pedagogy: a collective voice

Adopting the concept of a Voice without Organs (VwO), we present below a transcript composed of quotes from the 12 interviewed teachers; from other participants who gave relevant answers in the two final, open questions of the initial questionnaire; and from other teachers we met through the fieldwork, whose comments we took notes on while discussing their practices. Instead of categorizing excerpts of transcripts on the basis of similarity in viewpoint, we practice thinking without a subject, liberating our thought from overcoded images in order to “confront a reliance on objects and material representations to understand and explain” (Mazzei 2013, 732). Accordingly, we have woven these transcripts into a unique narrative to show a common ground of this voice emerging from the field. In fact, what inspired a post-qualitative analysis of the data was our perception that we had found a collective voice. It was precisely the possibility of overcoming differences through teachers’ perspectives and opinions that affected us. Their narratives did not seem to belong to a specific individual life experience but rather to the whole group of teachers we met in the field. The answers were given in Portuguese; therefore, what we present below is a translation from the original transcripts. In the effort to build a collective voice, our inquiry attempts to map utterances and connectives that display teachers’ affects in terms of relations and materializations emerging in the teacher–learner encounter, including those concerned with geography, family, aspirations, hopes, and disappointments.
As we are interested in the becoming of affect as pedagogy, one of the first steps in data organization was related to time. The excerpts were organized by tense, starting with the ones describing past experiences and flows of desire, now transformed in embodied history. These early excerpts were followed by present evidence of Deleuzian affect (affectus) and the materialization of such affect in what feminist theory posits as affect as pedagogy. Thus, the narrative maps a trajectory unfolding over time.

**Embodied history**

The VwO’s memories of the past mattered in choosing the teaching profession in the first place. The VwO explains various ways that this trajectory is still present in daily pedagogical choices.

I think it is very important for you to remember what you have already done, what you have become... what you have failed to do... even being self-critical sometimes... for you to understand your professional trajectory and how to be better for the students. I think reflection is fundamental, and it has an affective dimension for example... I remember these students... I remember the names, it has to do with my professional growth and with what I considered education to be. Our profession is beautiful because it poses this challenge of handling such different knowledge; practical knowledge, content knowledge... and we have to transform those into a coherent trajectory for our students... it is a situated look. This accounts for the complexity of our doing.

All the time, it is about memory and reflection on the practice... my attitude towards pedagogical practice has always been very reflective. It really bothers me when I do not reach my goal of reaching out to my students.

Every year, that we get a new group is difficult, every year it is... because we change and because they change, the group is different, and it is a relationship that you have to start from the ground... but we manage to conquer it... our work is very relational... (we end up changing a lot, groups change too) and original... that's what I believe to be education. As school contexts are very plural and education is a situated practice, the more access we have, the better, because it will never be the same, understand?

I also realized that I cannot remain silent, because people need to visualize the work of the public school, to exchange with colleagues, to inspire colleagues, it is a social responsibility. With the profession... it is evident that the moment you select what to share, you create a narrative, so you choose things to remember and things to be forgotten... I know that...

I’m an educator, I believe in public education, I did all my whole schooling, from basic education through higher studies, in public schools, so I want other teachers and my students to see that it is possible and get inspired...

**Affective labor**

The narrative around the professional trajectory empowers the VwO as it seeks social recognition and visibility. While experiencing the limitations of marginalized contexts, the VwO shows how it is permanently concerned with the students’ wellbeing in the school environment. It presents strategies to encounter the students in specific space-times, with respect for the affective labor that the bodies involved experience every day.

Our professional performance requires a permanent concern, a sensitive view towards students. Our planning necessarily has to go through students’ learning needs, not only cognitively, but also considering their pace for learning... their moment... “moment” is a good word... we have to understand the context in which the student belongs, their reality. Every year we get a new group, and it is difficult because we all change, and the relationship has to be started from the ground... Students’ first movement really is rejection... our work is very relational... and individually tailored... that’s what I believe education to be. It is a situated practice. For example, my students are not from this neighborhood, so they bring all the references to the violence they experience every day. This is very complicated. It creates instability...

These are elements that we have to evaluate constantly in teaching practice, everyone here has a close look at the students’ reality and needs. I think that all teachers do this... For example, when the school is invaded, we change plans and do some special empathy work with students. Also, by the end of the school year,
when students are usually exhausted, I try to do something lighter and more easy-going such as, once, we did a song festival to study dictatorship with them... But sometimes our plan doesn’t work... we have to understand that too... we need to know the context, our work is very relational, we have to know how to build the relationships in the classroom, we need to have empathy...

Here we also have the “student welcoming” ; it is a project that we have every year here, we welcome new students... It is very important that they perceive this space as being theirs... This dynamic involves all the school staff; there is always a thematic proposal, and the dedication is collective.

Each class has a profile, and that profile... anything that is done in the classroom is adjusted and adapted to the students’ profile... We have to understand their background... educational, personal, and social, so you have to adjust your planning and your strategy and your expectations within what may be, what you can get from the student.

Sometimes I feel the need to raise awareness about a certain topic, a problem that they have experienced or are experiencing now; for example, there was a period when we researched stories that talked about differences, respect, and empathy. I try to give individual attention... a special look to see what and how they are doing. They are not from this neighborhood, but they bring all the references of violence; for example, it was very challenging when the main drug dealer of the favela was murdered because it created instability... many students were absent for a week. These are elements that we have to constantly evaluate in our teaching practice.

There is a continuous flow... It is very stressful. Most of the time we do not have enough time to plan, organize, research, and give feedback accordingly. There is this “content and evaluation” agenda to follow... I feel like running all the time. We do what we can... the feeling and the interest to engage in a meaningful education exists.

### Capacity to be affected

Sometimes the VwO explicitly mentions its sudden change in capacity in the event of being affected, which is understood as a trigger for other activities in the classroom. Thinking about engagement, motivation, exposure to meaningful content, and cognitive development, the VwO expresses concern about each choice of materials and planned activity.

For my daily practice... it needs this sensitivity... the “thermometer” for the day... I like to practice meditation with them... many ask me, “oh, teacher, are we not going to relax today?” Sometimes I say, “guys, we are going to study today with Mozart”... “What is a Mozart, teacher?” Then I put it on, and then they relax because it is calm... or else, when I want to work on the emotions because they don't know how to name the emotions they feel... they feel, express themselves, but they don't know how to say what they are feeling... then I use the specific songs to activate... the emotions.

We have specific disciplines that focus on emotions, empathy, the relationships within the class, the behavior itself. For example, my elective was a “life project.” It was a very difficult, very aggressive class, and I used it to work with the concept of health—physical, mental, and social well-being.

We have to be both a teacher and a psychologist... sometimes I'm afraid of not being able to do it all...

I work with them with low-cost materials to be able to make the laboratories. For example, I set up terrariums with PET bottles, I mix water and oil to work density with them, we use flowers and coloring powder to show capillarity, and so on... I use this to motivate and make the material interesting for them... We do not have labs, so this is the way to do it.

You know... I create, develop, and remix most of the material used with my students depending on the group, on how I perceive them. I try to engage everyone and offer new ways to develop some content. For example, when learning about dictatorship, which is a pretty “heavy” topic, we studied it through songs, physical choreographies, and as an extra activity, some students developed a blog. I also use images and pictures; it is important to learn how to read non-textual information, interpretation, and possibilities.

All this material is mine; I bought it with my own money, and I bring it every day. I have to carry the weight, and it is a lot! I believe it is important for my practice, for my teaching, and for their learning.
Capacity to affect

In its narrative, the VwO shows commitment to facilitating the emergence of difference and multiplicity from the assemblage. Sensitivity to issues of equality and justice in education is manifested in how the VwO engages with the subject matter in a reflective way.

So, you have this problem: how am I going to... how is it that a student from such a certain environment could understand which possibilities, skills, and competencies he has if he is exposed to such a limited environment that usually offers no pre-determined narratives but one, or very few? Those students lack role models... their school life starts at a disadvantage, already.

(...) During this extra class, he is not studying to be a programmer but to understand that he has options, that he can change his history.

Although we are close to a large favela, we look for and manage to develop this connection... Yes, you need to have this connection with your students, otherwise, there is no way to at least try to change their odds of achieving something good in life.

We are attentive to everyone, but there is this group that shows such a commitment... They are ready for more: we give them extra exercises, they stay after class, they keep asking me questions and requesting explanations, we help them practice for scholarships... They are looking for a change.

I want them to actively participate in this room (the reading room). I want them to understand that this room is their place, they can be creative, they can practice “choice,” they are allowed to suggest and disagree. Those are new things for them.

I think that in terms of teaching nowadays, every time we share, collaborate, and use technology or even try a simple new thing in the classroom, I think that sometimes we are opening doors that we could never imagine what the future outcomes would be in the life of those students...

You can't change their past, but you can change what comes next, right? I tell my students that they can allow themselves to dream and look forward to grad school... Many of their parents did not even finish middle school.

Experimenting with the assemblage

As we have seen in the narrative presented, the embodied history of the VwO is manifested in a present time when affective labor is a daily experience, becoming “events,” in which the VwO manifests affirmative improvements in its power to act. Being affected, together with a capacity to affect and a potent desire for change, allows for a collision of forces ontologically related to transformation. The more a body experiences affection—that is, the capacity to affect and to be affected (Deleuze 1983)—the more it connects to multiplicities, and the more it can experience change and freedom.

In the attempt to experiment with (St. Pierre 2014) the assemblage presented above, we will recall the main theoretical groundings that have guided our inquiry about affect becoming a pedagogy, that is, the relationality and materiality that characterize a change in the capacity or power to act.

Relationality of affect as pedagogy: a desire to connect

The VwO points to an awareness of the teacher’s role as educator and to a powerful and creative desire to perform well, to transform, to help, and to connect. By no means is this desire a lack of something (Lenz Taguchi and Palmer 2014); rather, from a Deleuzian perspective, it shows a force that reaches out and creates new stratifications of subjectivity. This desire to act also entails a
political stance insofar it contemplates transformation through extensions, openness to flexibility, and awareness of agents and events. This desire is revealed by two main elements.

First, there are recurrent observations about multiple facets of teacher roles and priorities, which translate into teaching practices. The VwO is attentive to students’ realities and often violent domestic environments, as well as to their learning pace amid the school’s daily challenges. Its creative desire looks for alternative ways to reach students, such as offering extra classes on topics of interest (including poetry competitions and classes on dance, literature, and programming); and from the exposed narrative, we understand that unique circumstances often place teachers in the position of parents and/or counselors, circumstances requiring them to embrace sudden and extraneous demands, which can be tiring and overwhelming.

Second, these multiple roles disclose the stakes that the teachers experience in their relationships with students, as the VwO feels responsible for meeting students’ needs. The example that best shows this form of responsibility is the welcoming practice mentioned by the VwO, which echoed throughout other testimonies. Implicit demonstrations of affect toward students are also manifested through the value given to the feeling of belonging and attentive listening. Every year, with new students in the class, there is a need to start over, to build a new relationship with both old and new students. The students have changed over the summer break, and the rest of the assemblage has also changed in the meantime. In this constant becoming, desire is what sustains the intention, shown by the VwO, of trying to potentialize school time and encounters with students to open up multiple possibilities and opportunities for cognitive, social, and personal growth.

Materiality of affect as pedagogy: a manifestation of desire

What emerges from this analysis is that affect does not merely result in empathic presence or positive feelings (Stephens 2015)—it concretely materializes in curriculum flexibility and constant adaptation of planned activities. Adaptations such as meditation or work with classical music, as well as teaching history through popular songs and selecting very low-cost materials to develop science experiments, are good examples of how the VwO shows us an increased capacity to translate affect into action.

As the VwO discloses bodily changes and physical and material awareness, we notice how desire permeates the event of affecting and being affected, influencing teachers’ capacity to act. On the one hand, the VwO articulates the importance of continuing education, which includes teaching improvement as well as growth in the ability to plan and make pedagogical decisions. In its narrative, the VwO extends the assemblage to our previous inquiry and also welcomes other collectives drawing on teachers’ personal and professional backgrounds, relations with academics, reading and research groups, and communities of practice located outside the school building and classroom setting.

On the other hand, alongside specific content knowledge development, the VwO recognizes that teaching and learning involve continual becoming, not only of teaching practices but also of the material encounter between subjectivities. This encounter is depicted as the specific contingency that causes both students and teachers to be affected by a shared feeling or status of the body. Teachers try to engage students in social campaigns to learn about being part of a community. They enroll them in all sorts of singing, writing, and short movie production contests to show and debate their potential. In this sense, the desire to engage in good practices cannot be dissociated from a situated performance of affect. The VwO frequently mentions a specific context or situation in which an intense connection between bodies occurs. This is the case when a student shares the traumatic experience of domestic violence at school, or when the whole classroom experiences tension during a shooting in their neighborhood, in addition to other daily events that occur in the classroom and bring to the surface the structurally violent environment in which most of the students live. The VwO shows great awareness of affected bodies and their labor and
manifests sensitive yet persistent affection as it screens for hidden troublesome conditions, respects and encourages individualities, and manages to provide students with ever better experiences and opportunities.

**Thinking and imagining with concepts**

Thinking with theory and without method freed our research from the expected traditional qualitative results, showing alternative paths of material-discursive forces. In line with Kuntz (2021, 218), we see in post-qualitative inquiry a promise to “manifest difference” and to generate alternative ways of thinking and producing reality. As we thought with theory and without method, our fieldwork material invited us to consider a collectivity of forces that transcended individualities and differences and was manifested as a machinic assemblage of becomings, a complex network of agents—a Voice without Organs (VwO) inspired by the Deleuzian-Guattarian concept of a Body without Organs (BwO). As we thought with concepts, we experimented with how these theoretical approaches perform when supporting thinking differently about socially just pedagogies for public education. What potentialities for reimagining research methodologies and practices are afforded by the affective turn? What would the impacts of affect as pedagogy be in Brazilian public education?

Investigating the situated space-time assemblage from which the VwO arose shed light on the many agential forces present in the city of Rio de Janeiro’s public schools: actors’ expectations, limitations, and abilities; the physical infrastructure; the real curriculum and the intended one; unforeseen occurrences; personal backgrounds; and the social-cultural environments. In this assemblage, the physical space and school infrastructure are “agentic in their absence” (Pischetola et al. 2021): the lack of computers, labs, and internet connection is merely a reflection, or a consequence, of a deeper exclusion of these contexts and actors from society.

This brings us to consider, in addition, the absence and inefficiency of the government in complying with the policies that would address inclusion. This absence allows for a vacant territory subsequently filled by criminal organizations and alternative power structures that take over the administration of marginalized neighborhoods and establish a regime of violence. This is evident in the VwO narrative when it refers to the constant need for teachers to address students’ traumatic life experiences. For these teachers, the school becomes a protective space where students need to feel welcome and safe.

The VwO sheds light on some fundamental aspects of how affect becomes pedagogy and expresses itself in critical and committed attitudes, creating forces and desires that inspire change. Affect as pedagogy is attentive to difference and explores possibilities.

Becoming affected and sharing the intense relationality that constitutes the teacher–learner encounter offers the opportunity for a “change in capacity” (Massumi 2015). Relationality expresses itself in teachers’ desire to connect, inspiring their actions and their commitment to the students’ wellbeing and growth in the school environment. Despite structural constraints and limitations, teachers invest in relationships. They show autonomy as they model, create, and change curriculum according to students’ situational social, psychological, and cognitive conditions.

The VwO looked forward to an intense affection, one of bodies affected by the feelings and emotions of others, by situations and needs that require constant individual crafting to foster change. It is difficult to separate the inner and outer spaces of the school as if there were a barrier or a wall. The VwO’s capacity to be affected translated into the attempt to create such a safety circle while working on the elaboration of emotions and proposing activities to support students’ social inclusion among peers at school, in addition to attending to their cognitive development agenda. In the VwO’s actions, there is an agentic force of change, which addresses alternative
discourses and their materialization. There is a “relational force of ethics” (Kuntz 2021, 218) emerging from engaged practices and awareness, as the VvO does the work of “de/colonizing onto-epistemologies” (Bhattacharya 2020, 522) and creates different narratives for the students’ futures. Being affected by daily challenges resulted in the VvO’s desire to do better; they embrace the response-ability (Haraway 2016) of being agents of change for students by interfering and creating a new narrative, one that does not seek replication and reproduction of the current marginalization and social exclusion. These actions show the effort to open up for students a “possibility of authentic existence” (Dall’Alba 2020, 10). In fact, the VvO believes in the difference that every single action can make for the students. Changing a pre-set narrative has the potential to change students’ paths by influencing their choices.

In conclusion, affect as pedagogy seems to generate affirmative forms of desire, which are expressed by the VvO’s pursuit of different possible futures that can be created in authentic everyday encounters between teachers and learners. In Deleuzian-Guattarian terms, affect here becomes an active power with transformative qualities, a creative force that reconceives teacher–student relations, challenges school practices, defies the habit of reproduction, connects opening possibilities, and evokes imagination for future events. In this sense, affect and its becoming, in the form of pedagogy, can be seen as tools of social transformation.

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