

# The Power of Affections in the Curriculum Discursive Practices: Possibilities of the Development of a Relationship-Curriculum<sup>1</sup>

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## Designing paths

The desire that drives the writing this paper is on the motions, flows and intensities of life lived in school everyday life, involved in micro politics - in the affects and affections, desires, relationships, encounters, in which the processes and modes of subjectivation are related to the political, social and cultural processes. Through such processes reality outlines are generated in a motion of collective life creation, that vibrates in body encounters that affect and are affected.

Encounter is seen an event, with different intensities and drive of life. It assumes difference, divergence, dissonance, that is, encounter as politics. Political power is on the making of possibilities, of motions that enable to produce an ethical-political *ethos*, in the creation of other ways of life, in the creation of life as a work of art, of life at/about school.

Thus, this paper aims at thinking how the curriculum generates flows and mobilities, beyond the one materialized by the school syllabus and curricular designs. Thinking about a “relationship-curriculum”, wishing to articulate “[...] a knowledge about life, a touching one, that moves minds” (GARCIA, 2007, p. 104.) A curriculum that moves, dislocates concepts, ideas and knowledge making them “[...] dance rather than march axioms full of certainty” (GARCIA, 2007, p. 104).

The methodology of cartographical research has allowed to follow up the moves of students’ (both boys and girls) desire lines, from different grades at a public Elementary School that dares to show a view full of intensities and flows. And why not to say, full of life? Motions of male and female students’ bodies that vibrate and cause resonance as they make up connections, relationships, encounters and unique, unstable, changeable and pulsing existences.

This way, the cartographical research in this study searched to capture and register how, in collective assemblages of enunciates and modes of powers and actions, the school reproduces or makes up pedagogical practices considered to be “true” themselves. In order to do that, the cartographical research focused on the follow up of processes of the productions of encounters, and affects/affections between bodies



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Spinoza (2008), as well as the local discursivity (Foucault, 1983), expressed in conversation network seen as discursive practices.

School involves, besides the paperwork emanated from the institutions and education managers, documents produced by the school, projects, plans, textbooks, media, everything that crosses the school space-time, as well as everything that is experienced, felt, practiced. Thus, everything that is registered in the documents, conversations, feelings and actions experienced by the subjects of the school everyday life, and beyond it, assume motions and rhythms that, as a whole, turn out to be different and wild, in spite of the attempt to straighten them, and make them similar.

Strange is the view that territorializes and derritorializes in a few minutes, and in which different dimensions get to entangle themselves. Strange is the view in which in the name of established truths, it castrates creative motions. Such a complex view, since it connects physical and virtual spaces, showing to be open to the sensitive and interactional occupation, and maximizing networks of affects/affections throughout conversations.

As theoretical intercessors that enabled affect assemblages through bodies encounters in discursive practical networks and/or conversations, we refer to Spinoza (2008) as to affects, approaching them to Foucault's existence aesthetics (1983) in order to problematize school everyday life as a possible field to the power of a relationship-curriculum.

Some motions are thus presented, that have been experienced from the assemblage created with Spinoza, Foucault and the students' life production, and from some techniques. Such techniques aimed at establishing some kind of relationship with students, such as sessions involving movies, storytelling, drawings, songs, paintings, jokes and games. The aim in using such techniques is to enable/motivate/trigger conversation networks in which it is possible to make encounters/relationships and also to get into the networks created by students to experience the power of affects and affections experienced in school everyday life.

### **Motion One: body, power and affects**

*Sometimes, in class, the teacher says something and I daydream [...] it seems that I'm in a different world [...] It is really cool! (3<sup>rd</sup> grade student)*

How can school everyday life be problematized as a possible field for micro-political power produced in encounters, affects and affections? Which motions from students' bodies increase life power, influencing the development of a curriculum that comes from the relationship with someone else?

According to Spinoza (2008), what should be acknowledged by men are human affects, and his proposition of a knowledge ethics means knowing to be affected, and being affected so that we can live happily. Human affects explain human beings' behaviors, their sadness and happiness. Ethics implies getting to know/learn what our affects are, how we affect and how we are affected, that is, what it is to know/learn what constitutes us, what affects us, increases or decreases our power.

Spinoza defines "affect" showing that it is indissolubly a bodily affection: "By emotion I mean modifications of the body, whereby the active power of the said body is increased or diminished, aided or constrained, and also the ideas of such modifications" (SPINOZA, 2008, p. 163). Therefore, even joy itself is on the body an affection that increases or motivates its acting power, and on the mind it is an idea that increases or motivates its thinking power.



To Spinoza, the human body is made of many individuals (of different nature), each one of them is constituted of and affected by other bodies in several ways: “The individuals that make up the human body, and that, consequently, the human body itself, are affected by external bodies in many ways” (SPINOZA, 2008, p. 105). Therefore, the body is designed as a plurality, through a series of exchanges with the environment, that is, the body pulses from and at the encounters with other bodies that affect and are affected. “In order to preserve itself, the human body needs many other bodies, through which it is as continually regenerated” (Spinoza, 2008, p. 5).

A body is defined by everything that distinguishes it from other bodies ( motion and rest, speed and slowness) and by the affects produced by other bodies, where the ability of a body to be affected by another body is due the complexity level of its internal composition.

The pupil’s speech used as epigraph in this “Movement One” leads us to discuss what enables students to “daydream”, to “be in a different world”, as dislocations, as crossings, deterritorializations produced by vibration, by the relationships of bodies that vibrate and, in this motion, increase their power of action.

How to think the power of affects from bodies’ relationships, understanding relationships as the different lines that produce, create, invent, intersect multiple possibilities produced in the field of possibilities? How to think the relationship that takes place “among” students’ vibrating bodies, which does not imply something that is “inside” and “outside”, but from the events? What does this encounter with vibrating bodies produce as power in school everyday life concerning the curriculum? Is it possible to think in a “relationship-curriculum”?

“Relationship-curriculum” that makes sense of networks woven from different languages, knowledge, action and power, in short, from different expressions in a bodily crossing route, for a body crosses concepts, invades them, trespass them, makes sense of them, uses them, re-creates them, invents them.

A “relationship-curriculum” that is written as we experience the spaces created by school. A “relationship-curriculum” that is made from the increasing on the power of affecting and being affected, which implies in coexistence of other vibrating bodies, making the other bodies which affect us, move us, take us from our places, alarm us, make us create. A “relationship-curriculum” that is crossing, dislocation, assemblage.

## **Motion Two: Knowledge, affectivity and existential aesthetics**

According to Spinoza, there is no detachment between knowledge and affectivity. There are, however, different types of knowledge that correspond to different emotional regimes. Knowledge and affect, combined, constitute a way of living, which opens to us a possibility of interlacing Spinoza and Foucault (CARVALHO, 2012).

Thinking about the possibility of an existential aesthetics from Foucault – in which life becomes a work of art – means the deconstruction of ordinary concepts of work and art, usually associated to visual arts, music or literature. Thus one can understand how such concepts might build the way of being, the way of living.

To Abbagnano (1982), it was Nietzsche who insisted on the practical nature of art, seeing on it as a manifestation of power willingness, subject to a feeling of power and fullness, as one can see in the case of drunkenness, for instance. Art is willingness, intensity. To Nietzsche, the concept of work of art is associated to the whole power-to-produce and, this way, nature itself is an *artist* as well: “The world as a work of art which gives birth to itself” (NIETZSCHE, 2008, p. 397), which bears itself.



How is it possible to build and understand life as a work of art? To what extent ethics and aesthetics come across each other, giving birth to life, making up ways of living, of living in the world, forming an *ethos* (ways of acting, accomplishing, thinking, and knowing)?

Making life a work of art consists in the willingness to engage an attitude. Nietzsche (2001, p. 132) presents a close connection between art and life: “As an aesthetic phenomenon, existence is still bearable to us, and through art eyes and hands are given to us, and, above all, good consciousness as to make ourselves part of such phenomenon”. In the work “Will and Force”, there is the connection among will, power and life, in which

[...] willingness mentions spontaneity of life outbreak, of its free motion of self-exposure or apparition. Spontaneously, freely, life is an event to come to light, to make it visible and then grow, that is, worsen, intensify itself. And this is power, as it is achievement, and then it imposes, rules, governs, it is worth it [...] such growth, such intensification of life itself is characterized by doing or becoming even more simple and this is superbly conveyed in art, in artistic creation, ultimately, in a work of art. (FOGEL, 2008, p. 11-10)

According to Foucault, in the Greek-Hellenistic period there is no distinction between worldly things and human nature things. The distinction is in the way to know and what we know about the gods, men and the world will have an effect on the nature of the individual, in his/her way of acting, in his/her “*êthos*”: [...] making “*ethos*”, is modifying, transforming the way of being; one’s mode of existence. It is “*ethopoiós*” what might change an individual’s way of being (FOUCAULT, 2006a, p. 291).

One of the practical functions of the self practices is the “ethopoietical” function. The transformation of truth in *ethos*. Ethics would be a mode of existence, since there is a connection between the art of existence and self care. Art in the sense of form which presents itself to its own existence, as life expansion. Access to self is associated to certain practices, to certain techniques and to a series of concepts and notions that integrate a way of knowing. “Practice of itself identifies and incorporates with the art of living itself (a “*tékhnē tou bîou*”). The art of living, art of oneself are identical, they become identical or, at least tend to be” (FOUCAULT, 2006a, p. 253).

Ethics, as it is understood by this author, is the relationship that is settled to oneself, which determines the way through which an individual exerts a transformation on him/herself, aiming at inventing more beautiful ways of being and living. Thus, ethics differs from moral, whose coercive rules lead to the judgment of actions and intentions, when taking as reference values such as being the “right” and “wrong”, the “good” and “evil”, and so on. “This is what I have tried to rebuild: the formation and the development of a practice of self, that aims at building oneself as the artisan of beauty of his/ her own life” (FOUCAULT, 2006b, p. 244). Self-practice as the art of freedom, as practice of freedom, which opens possibilities to new self-relationships, new self-practices, as self-art:

Art reminds us of animal vigor conditions: it is, on one hand, an exceedance and an overflow of corporeity flourishing towards the world of images and desires; on the other hand, an excitement of animal function by images and desires in life at its potential – an elevation of the sensation of living, a stimulus of it. (NIETZSCHE, 2008, p. 400)

To Milovic (2004, p. 114) “[...] we have to create ourselves, to affirm life itself as a work of art. Self-care, as in the last part of *The History of Sexuality*, ends with a new aesthetic of life. The ethical question on the norms ends in aesthetics”. Ethics presently must not be elaborated with the idea of reasoning, but with the idea of



sensitivity. “Ethics is new sensitivity to *others*. Subjectivity is founded in this heteronomy. Subjectivity and Other in Itself” (Milovic, 2004, p. 119).

And isn't it what Foucault invites us to find - other modes of generating subjectivity, other possibilities of the individual background, other ways of thinking the relationship itself and with others?

Merçon (2009, p. 28) approaches the becoming of ethics relating it to the concept of “affective learning”, pointing out that learning is essentially affective: it is about a “learning that is an understanding and intensification of our power of affecting and being affected”. Thus, the meaning of affect refers to the notion of encounter; affective learning being an art of encounter - “learning about what decreases our power or about what maximizes us.”

Therefore, which encounters have been engendered in school everyday life that will strengthen knowledge? How is it possible to enable/ intensify an affective learning from the art of students' encounters in school everyday life? Which knowledge has strengthened students' lives?

Some students' motions were chosen as an attempt to capture the existing vibration in what affects them relating to what they like at school:

*I like school because I have many friends – classmates and colleagues; because I learn a lot every day; because we learn inside here; because it is cool; because I learn a lot; because it is a way of succeeding in life; because I really like studying, I like learning, in order to be successful and also because we have lots of friends here; because at school I learn things, I learn cool things; because it is cool and it is going to be important for my future career; because some teachers are good; because education is free of charge, you don't have to pay for anything, teachers, and so on; because everything is clean here, the meal is top-quality and the teachers are great; because it helps me behave better than ever; because it is very important for the people who study and it will be good for the future; because it is a place where we can learn lots of things. School is really good, and if we don't study we won't get anywhere.*

We can notice in students' speeches - both males and females - that school apparently produces an increase in the power as it means a learning possibility, in which education is pointed as the possibility of being successful in life. However, we see these expressions as “joy-products”, that is, as clichés that permeate the school ideology. Much importance is attributed to school concerning teaching and learning.

Another motion that occurs refers to the relationship between the self and the other: friends, teachers, meals, cleaning. Thus, we could question: does the increase in power from the affections produced in the relationships between different bodies imply the possibility of thinking knowledge as the most powerful affect in the creation of life as a work of art?

### **Motion Three: Knowledge as the most powerful affect**

Does knowledge occur producing affects, or do affects produce knowledge? If getting to know oneself means to affect and to be affected, what is the relationship between knowledge and affect? What are the intensities and possibilities for the creation of life that pulses and that makes the invention of processes possible in which knowledge is the most powerful affect?

Spinoza claims that the way we think, the way we know implies the way we live, that is to say, to Spinoza whatever the way of knowledge, this reflects the way of living. The ethical path suggested by Spinoza leads us to think in the dignity of living what we are, facing our problems, expectations, desires, what would lead us to create



one's own lifestyle. The solutions for the problems found throughout life often imply one invention.

If the existence of human body, in Spinoza, is defined by a proportion between the characteristics of motion and rest, and by its constant relationship to other bodies, it can be said that the power of a body is defined by its aptitude in affecting and being affected. In this conception of power there is not only the beginning of action (affecting), but also of affection (being affected).

The bigger the affective aptitude, the more powerful and complex the bodies will be. Thus, an active body is one whose affective sensibility is strong and, being affected does not mean suffer, on the contrary, "the more the body's aptitude to be affected is reduced, the more the body lives in a restricted way, insensitive to a great number of things [...]" (SÉVÉRAC, 2009, p. 24). Becoming active corresponds to an opening to the human sensitivity, to an increase in his/her aptitude to be affected or to affect. We possess rational knowledge, according to Spinoza, sharing it and, in order to do so, we need to expand it. The ethical aim is understood by the active desire for knowledge. The bigger the emotional ability, the bigger the mind's ability to think about several things simultaneously, and, therefore, understand the convenience, difference and opposition relationships.

Which motions, encounters, affects, affections, and desires have been lived by students, enabling the development a "relationship-curriculum"? How can we think about a "relationship-curriculum" from the flows, connections, relationships, encounters, unique existences? What do students express from their conversations, bodies and motions? How can we think of knowledge from experiences, from what increases acting power, that maximizes curricular flows?

When they were inquired if what they experienced outside the school had any connection to what the school teaches, students pointed out to what is studied in different areas of knowledge and their relationship with everyday life:

*School teaches us several things that are part of our daily life; it teaches us that we are supposed to use condoms in order not to get infected by AIDS; we learn how to read, write, respect...; here at school we learn that education is very important...; discipline, behavior; we learn about the environment; we learn everything... we don't learn how to curse; to read; to respect our parents; we learn the cardinal points, which teach us where we are; in Science we learn about sex, about how to avoid diseases; it teaches mostly Math and Portuguese, which I use for everything; Math, for instance, helps me differ prices, Portuguese helps me to speak and express myself and in English I learn different kinds of things; in the supermarket, for example, I go there and it says that something costs R\$10,00 and you give R\$100,00 and if you get the 78,00 out of 100,00, you get the wrong change and you don't realize it;*

We can analyze, from the students' opinions, that there is a curriculum that has as its core speaking, writing and mathematical logic based on notions of numbers and problem solving, besides science with natural world interfaces, from a physical world in which the human being relates to another individual. However, in other speeches some motions will be presented, which are inter-related with life lived, with experience they had at and beyond school.

#### **Motion Four: flow intensities, affects and affections...**

How can school everyday life be problematized as a probable field for micro-political power, engendered in the encounters, affects and affections? What are the intensities and possibilities for the making of life that vibrates and that enables the invention of processes in which knowledge is the most powerful affect?



Students - both males and females - have shown through their bodies' motions that there is another possibility of life meant to be generated in school everyday life, establishing unique existential experiences through what affects and maximizes them. When they were inquired about why the school teaches some particular contents and about what they would like to learn at school, there is a belief that what is taught at school is something relevant:

*[...]Because the school wants us to be successful in life; school teaches many things; because school is teaching me much more, it teaches me how to read and write, to be intelligent and polite, because we will be able to know what to accomplish in the world; to learn how to read and write, and not to get my classmates' stuff; I think school is teaching us to go to a better course; school is teaching me how to be polite; to be intelligent, polite and to be successful in life; I would like to learn how to read faster; so we can get a good job and learn more. But I what I would like was to play soccer; for us to get a good job in the future, but I wanted to learn crafting; So I could be successful in life [...].*

However, there is always a "but...". And this "but" comes from what affects them, from the unique motions produced through will, interest, desire, which registers some marks on their bodies and where power is for the making of knowledge as the most powerful affect.

*I wish there were more jokes; I wish I could learn how to play the guitar, the drums and music; I wish I could learn how to play volleyball and basketball, because I like those sports a lot; I wish I could learn how to swim; I want to learn how to play basketball because I am very tall and I like it; soccer, volleyball, basketball and dodgeball; learn how to play a musical instrument; I want to learn more things such as soccer and indoor soccer; I wish I could learn how to play indoor soccer, drama and video-making; I wish I could learn Spanish and volleyball; I wish I could learn how to speak Chinese, Spanish, Italian and English; practice sports and arts; swimming; yes, many things such as swimming; I like arts [...].*

It is noteworthy noticing that the students, in the conversation networks, present affects that increase or decrease the power of life at school, without disqualifying the knowledge present at the several areas of knowledge. However, there is a desire of creating motions, in boosting knowledge, in setting free the pulsing life that there is and vibrates in their bodies. This desire means to expand pulsing life to beyond classrooms, experiencing other school spaces-time: the school courts, the kitchen garden, the library, the video lab. Even being in the classroom, there is also the need to (impelled by students) create other ways of organization (or disorganization?), in which students invent different ways of grouping, of getting together, establishing relationships, dislocations, experiencing affects and affections.

Knowledge, then, is conceived all the time through the experience lived and felt, whose immanency is on the motions, in the relationships, in the inventions. Learning, for students is not only representing a certain reality, but it implies the co-engendering of life experienced, felt, created. Many times, in school everyday life, students' search to lend visibility to life that pulses in their bodies, which are not present in textbooks, in programs, contents of several disciplines, but that are pulsing, vibrating and intense.

The power of students' motions and of what affects them, and that allows thinking school in a way that makes sense and that is connected to life. Before this framework a question emerges: Does school talk about things that make sense for students, both male and females? How do students build knowledge? What is the relationship between knowledge and affect? And between knowledge and life?



### **At last, in never-ending motions...**

The attempt in this paper was to transform emotions in writing, from several crossings of immanence plans with students. These have shown in a unique way that encounters are probable to happen in the school everyday life and that the production of good encounters involves the ethical-political issue from all those that are part of school in their daily lives.

The research aimed, then, at opening the school territory to the world, to the life immanence plan, to a relationship-curriculum that procedurally allows teaching and learning of an active life maximized by an affect policy.

But where do affects come from? Which ones make us active or passive? Spinoza (2008) describes affect as an affection of the body through which its existing and acting power is increased or diminished. According to him, the soul is the body's idea, and an emotion is the idea, in the soul, of body affection. In other words, an emotion is a simultaneous body and psychic event. Thus, between body and soul there is no hierarchical relationship, there is no command, there is no subordination, that is, to mental passivity corresponds to body passivity and to mental activity corresponds a body activity.

According to Spinoza (2008), there are three primary emotions: desire, pleasure and pain. To him, pleasure and pain are not states of the soul, they are ways of being or existing. Pleasure is the transition of a man from a less to a greater perfect, a feeling that our capacity or aptitude for existing and acting increase due to an external cause, in passion, or an internal cause, in action. Thus, pain is the passage from a major perfection to a minor one, creating a diminishing feeling of our aptitude for existing and acting. Thus, pleasure triggers action.

Spinoza (2008) develops the passion and action theory according to levels of force or intensity. Thus, a passion is stronger than another when it increases our body and mind's capacity to exist, the force not confusing with our states of psychic or body excitement, with the violence of emotions. Stronger passions (*conatus* strengthening) will come from joy, whereas the weaker ones will come from sadness.

Actions, being perfection or bigger realities, will always be stronger than stronger passions. Freedom springs from this and in this motion of sad passions to happy ones and the joy passions to the actions aroused from the desire and the joy as adequate or internal causes.

We understand, therefore, a relationship-curriculum as one managed by pleasure that, as revolutionary force, maximizes the good encounter and thinking. In a scape for reflection about image, the disciplined, domesticated knowledge, from traditional curricula a relationship-curriculum suggests a relationship of promotion of pleasure understood and a good and social right. A production of revolutionary life, since pleasure and desire are revolutionary, considering that they don't go through imitation, but through motion of thought.

Moving the thought is creation, it is not imitation, it is becoming. And becoming is what is to come. It is something I will invent and the possibility of invention is always the result of an encounter that is not a case of thinking, production, of "cliché", for it is a case of a body that thinks and transforms, and affects through and within encounters.

In a relationship-curriculum, in teaching and learning, there is no more "me" or "him/her", but there are affect and affectivity groups, always communities, always a collective and/or a group. Joy does not search individual and/or focused singularity, it does not search learning standardized by comparative rates (a feature of curricula that



are based on sadness, and, therefore, in passivity), but always a collective-individual, a community-individual. And then, there is always learning and teaching that involve political power.

Thus, relationship-curriculum seeks a learning life that is an invention of itself and of life, since it goes beyond the field of the organic body of an individual through encounter, through living, through corporeity experience in school everyday life. Beyond it, we hug each other, meet, coexist, live together, relate to one another, in the sense of the production of political life, of life that recovers its political power.

Being *conatus* the vital principle that leads us to develop more and more our power intensity throughout our existence, as we are made of the intrinsic power of qualitative perseverance in existence, we should take part in interactions that enable the elaboration of emotions associated to the assertion power of values based on love and expansion of life within social interaction. They are relationships, and thus, the increase of our acting power comes straight from a good encounter at the heart of a traditional curriculum.

Due to that, a relationship-curriculum should search the development of interaction networks aiming at mutual use of what is excellent in the creative potential of the parties that interact to each other.

Students have shown, from desire, possible paths for the creation of an ethical becoming, which strengthens school everyday life. "It is in active desiring, in the line with powerful thinking, that ethical becoming is claimed, that it might be impelled by our desire, it is built as unrepeatable, non-transferable, unique path" (MERÇON, 2009, p. 20).

The affect experience, affecting and being affected, allows the invention of ways of living, in which life insists in persevering. They are motions, therefore, processes, never-ending, periodic. When students bring their own life experience to school, they open the possibility of taking a chance in life relations, woven from different lines which intersect, creating other possible fields to think of the curriculum development, for instance.

The conversation networks, seen as networks of different relationships are powerful for the creation of knowledge as the most powerful affection, in which knowledge is considered a result of bodies' encounters. Therefore, the "relationship-curriculum" concept was thought bearing in mind the power of the networks that are created all the time, undone, re-created, indicating an opening to human sensitivity, to the aptitude of affecting and being affected in which, the relations to other bodies, different types of knowledge are produced.

Students' motions are powerful for thinking school as it is, pulsing and intense. At all times, students are, in their own ways, creating ways so that educational action is possible, even if it is not visible to some people, but visible for those who in their motions, in their bodies there is some vibration, causing resonance as they invent connections, relations, encounters; unique, unstable, changing and pulsing existences. At last, they open a path to emotions and to the possibility of making a work of art out of life, even if it is in a latent state and/or as a collective-individual possibility.

## Notes

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