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## **CLOWNING IN EDUCATION: laughter and joy in teaching practice**

**PALHAÇARIA NA EDUCAÇÃO:  
o riso e a alegria na prática docente**

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## **Clowning in education: laughter and joy in teaching practice**

**Abstract:** In this article, I share my reflections on laughter and joy at school as a clown teacher. By approaching clown artistry as a possibility for training teachers, we will think about the concept of a teaching figure who, by exercising the practices and philosophies of clowning, can allow themselves to laugh at themselves and with the students, in search of a collective engagement so that laughter and joy permeate educational processes. Finally, we argue that clowning practices are a way of exercising laughter as a form of subversion and joy as strength in struggle, thus shaking up traditional and colonial educational structures.

**Keywords:** clowning in education; laughter in education; joy in education; art and teacher training; clown teacher.

## **Palhaçaria na educação: o riso e a alegria na prática docente**

**Resumo:** Neste artigo, compartilho minhas reflexões como professor-palhaço sobre o riso e a alegria na escola. Abordando a palhaçaria enquanto possibilidade de formação de professoras e professores, pensaremos sobre a concepção de uma figura docente que, ao exercitar as práticas e filosofias das palhaçarias, pode se permitir a rir de si e com as estudantes, em busca de um engajamento coletivo para que o riso e a alegria permeiem os processos educativos. Por fim, sustentamos que as práticas das palhaçarias são um caminho para o exercício do riso como forma de subversão e da alegria como força de luta, movimentando assim as estruturas educacionais tradicionais e coloniais.

**Palavras-chave:** palhaçaria na educação; riso na educação; alegria na educação; arte e formação docente; professor-palhaço.



## **Fool**

When the young man was picking snails and pebbles on the riverbank until two o'clock in the afternoon Nhá Velina Cuê was also there. The Paraguayan old woman to see that young man picking snails on the edge of the river till two o'clock in the afternoon, shook his head from one side to the other at the gesture of whoever was with pity for the young man and said the word fool. The young man heard the word fool and ran home to see in his thirty-two dictionaries what it was to be a fool. He found about nine expressions that they suggested similes to fool. And he laughed at liking it. And he set apart for him the nine similes. Such as: Fool is always someone added as a child. Fool is a tree exception. Fool is one who likes to talk deep nonsense with the waters. Fool is the one who always speaks with an accent of his origins, always someone obscure as a fly. It is someone who builds their house with little speck. It is one who discovered that afternoons are part of beauty in birds. Fool is the one who looking at the ground, sees a worm being one. Fool is a kind of sanitation with dawns. That is what the young man reaped in his thirty-two dictionaries. And he estimated himself (Barros, 2008, p. 83).

## **1 Introduction**

This article is the result of my thirteen years of experiences working as a clown-teacher in public schools on the outskirts of the city of São Paulo. As an artist, clown, and art teacher, I have been looking for ways to record moments of subversion, indiscipline, and transgression in the school space, specifically related to the philosophies and practices of clowning in my education. These experiences were transformed into stories that were recorded in the master's thesis entitled "Clowning and Education: the adventures of a clown-teacher in public school," held at the Unesp Institute of Arts, under the guidance of Professor Luiza Christov.

My survival as a teacher in public schools is closely linked to my existence as a clown. Because clowning taught me possibilities of ways to be a teacher and to invent ways to inhabit the classroom. The methodology of this research is based on the writing of real stories lived in schools to reveal concepts of clowning that enable us to revisit the conception of the teacher figure and its performance in the school space, sustaining the training of education professionals who, by working with exercises, philosophies, and practices of clowning, can find ways to live the classroom based on listening, affectivity, vulnerability, inadequacy, collectivity, indiscipline, and transgression. In this article, I choose to delve especially into two fundamentals that can inspire teaching practice: laughter and joy.



## 2 Little stories of laughter in public school

### 2.1 *Teeth* – story to be read aloud, while showing the teeth

I have just arrived at the new school. I go to the office to introduce myself to the coordinators, the director, and the assistant directors. I need to solve something about the workload. I enter the principal's office smiling, saying that I am very happy to work in that place, because, besides knowing that it is a good school, its location is very close to my home.

The director looks at me. Serious, in a scolding tone, she pronounces her first words:

— I don't want you to show off your teeth to the students!

I laugh out loud:

— Show off my teeth? What do you mean to show off my teeth? — I ask, not understanding, and finding her speech amusing.

— I am angry and I like my teachers to be angry. Don't smile at the students in class. You need discipline. Not to show your teeth.

With a yellow smile, still showing my teeth, I use my survival tactic: I pretend not to understand. "I just ignore it". I smile and shake my head. We keep up the conversation, and she welcomes me to school.

On the way back home, I walk down the street while letting out a big laugh, baring my teeth: what will happen when she finds out what my research is about?

### 2.2 *Let it loose* - Story to be read after laughing with a student

I enter a first-year classroom for the first time. The little children, very small, the smallest in the school, about six years old, are sitting in their rows. It is always difficult for the first years. They have just arrived from early childhood education, where there are more parks, more toys, and more space to stay on the ground. And immediately they must get used to the mercantile life: they must sit still, in rows, doing lessons.

They look at me with curiosity and grace. I pretend to stumble when I enter the room. They look at each other. I think it is weird. No laughter. I look at them and see them holding back their laughter. Some with their hands covering their mouths, others trying hard not to laugh. I don't understand. The effort they make is huge.

A little one gets up and comes to ask me who I am, then another comes to me, then another, until I'm surrounded by six children talking all at the same time, curious about my presence. I ask



them to sit down so I can explain who I am and what we will do. One gets up and comes to hug me to say “hi”, then another, and another. I ask them to sit down again. I realize that I will not be able to do anything I prepared before the most important action: greet them. I then say that, first, I will say “hi” to each one. I ask them to stretch their arms, from their seat, because I’m going to turn into a rocket that will go out greeting everyone in a minute. I start my transformation in front of the whole class. The legs, the arms, the head, everything turns into a rocket. And once again I notice the children looking at each other, with their hands over their mouths and shoulders raised, holding back their laughter. Before I start greeting them, the snap comes to my head. I finally understand. I say to everyone, indignantly: “guys, you can laugh in this class, alright!?” The room erupts in laughter. Relief. The laughing animal finally breaks free. As a rocket, I cross the room greeting each one. Amid smiles, shy giggles, and laughter, we established our first connection: here you can laugh.

### **3 Laughing at yourself and with the students: being a fool because you are a teacher, being a teacher because you are a fool**

One day, in the teachers’ room, a teacher said to me: “You are beginning so you need to know: playing with children is cool, but when it comes to teaching you need to be serious, speak harshly, otherwise the students will not respect you”. Another time, I heard from a teacher: “In the classroom, I am Hitler. You need to have a firm hand and show the students who is in charge, otherwise they will not respect you.” Another, at the end of my class, said to his class: “Now the fun is over, playing with Professor Felipe is over. Time to do the lesson. No more playing.”

And so, I heard countless times, in the corridors of the schools I worked, in the classrooms and in the teachers’ rooms, that the class needs to be a moment of seriousness. That students only want to play and don’t want to learn. That to be respected as a teacher, I would need to be more “firm”. That art and physical education classes are play classes and that the other subjects are “serious”.

The situations narrated in the two stories shared and the statements above, which are so common in the educational environment, show a thought about being a teacher. They explain the construction of a school and especially a concept of the teaching figure, which opposes pleasure and fun to the seriousness of learning. Mistakenly, they consider respect as the opposite of joy and play as the adversary of learning. As bell hooks taught us, “Being smart and being serious are traits that teachers value. However, it can happen that we are so serious that we leave no room for humor in the classroom” (2020, p. 117).

The author Jorge Larrosa (2010) proposes laughter as a way of subverting this instituted imaginary about education and being a teacher, suggesting that teachers can laugh more at their ideas and accept laughter more from students. He understands laughter not as mockery or escape from seriousness, but as an ally to learning and experience.



Laughter destroys certainties. And especially that certainty which constitutes the cloistered conscience: the certainty of oneself. But only in the loss of certainty, in the permanent questioning of certainty, in the ironic distance of certainty, is the possibility of becoming. Laughter enables the spirit to soar over itself. The bell hat has wings (Larrosa, 2010, p. 181).

In the same way, the author states that there is little laughter in pedagogy. "Perhaps my main objective in talking about laughter is the conviction that laughter is prohibited, or at least quite ignored, in the pedagogical field" (2010, p. 171). And to this fact he points out, as one of his hypotheses, that in pedagogy there is a lot of moralizations, with the pedagogical discourse having a "serious," "harsh," and "pathetic" tone. "The more moral a class is, the less laughter there is in it" (Larrosa, 2010, p. 172). The morality that takes over our education system establishes rules of behavior, mechanisms for controlling bodies and regulating subjectivities. Laughter, therefore, can appear in pedagogical thinking as an action to desacralize the professorial tone, taking it out of the unreachable and infinitely superior place of those who utter knowledge and think that students should receive and venerate it passively.

But when did we turn school into a bore?

In our country, since the beginning of its foundation, because the school institution was born anchored to coloniality and, therefore, to Christian morality. Schools emerged in Brazil in the sixteenth century, with the aim of educating the privileged Brazilian classes of Europeans. Institutional public education began with the attempt to catechize indigenous peoples and the imposition of European thought by the action of priests and Jesuits, a movement that Luzuriaga called "religious public education" (Saviani, 2014, p. 186).

We can analyze that, precisely because of its transgressive character, laughter has historically undergone the attempt to control the Catholic Church in various periods, from the Middle Ages to the present day. However, with the prohibition of laughter, it found a place outside the official contexts, in squares and festivals, and was later incorporated even into some rites considered sacred (Bakhtin, 2010, p. 68). In this way, laughter demonstrates its power of subversion, of questioning, of mockery of the instituted norm, despite its attempt to control it. The monotheistic Euro-Christian thought (Santos, 2015, p. 37) and the colonization process that instilled guilt and suffering as a form of redemption from sins is at the basis of school construction in Brazil and has repercussions on our contemporary education. Now, if the history of the emergence of public schools in our country is linked to religious education, it is not surprising the moralizing and rigid tone of our educational system to this day and the little resonance of laughter in the structure of its thought.

According to Maria Lúcia de Oliveira, the education inaugurated by European schools in modernity, a model exported to Brazil, inhibited most pleasures to the detriment of the imposition of rationality, but allowed a type of pleasure: moral.

A possible pleasure would be the enjoyment of the students' recognition by the school authority. This gives moral pleasure. Supported by disciplinary rigor, it



can be said that the interest of the school is linked to the well-behaved, obedient student, and not exactly to the creative student (Oliveira, 2006, p. 81).

The constancy of this thought can still be seen in our schools nowadays, because much of the joy allowed by the school institution is experienced by those considered good students, that is, people who correspond to the established moral standards.

In another historical moment, we can see the structuring of morality in Brazilian education also with legal support when, in 1969, Decree-Law 869 included Moral and Civic Education as a mandatory subject in schools of all levels and modalities in the country, imposing the ideology of the civil-military regime in the curriculum, during the period of the dictatorship. Once again, the term "moral" establishes rigidity and discipline as the basis for the learning relationship.

Today, conservative morality continues to be renewed in our public educational institutions, especially with the growing resumption and dissemination of the thought of the Brazilian extreme right and the propagation of neo-Pentecostal ideology by evangelical churches. Many times, walking through the corridors of the school, Larrosa's criticism echoes in my head: "There are times when a class looks like a church, a court, a patriotic celebration, or a cultural mass" (2010, p. 172).

The remnants of this moralizing education, which underpins the creation of our schools in different historical moments, have repercussions in the establishment of a teaching figure who finds in the coercion of pleasures and in the affirmation of a serious, rigid and authoritarian posture, the basis of his work. When we fall into the trap of conservative moralistic education, we run the risk of continuing with oppression and reinforcing prejudices instead of working to break them. If the school is a den of monotheistic Euro-Christian morality, racism, sexism, and LGBTQIAPN+phobia will reign at the heart of its structure. And how many times we, teachers, also became agents of this educational system and let moralism dressed in "seriousness" take over our relationships in class?

But in this research, we can ask ourselves: what if, instead of a Jesuit-teacher, a military-teacher, or a pastor-teacher, we have a clown-teacher?

More than dressing up as a clown and performing at school, being a clown-teacher means, for me, a philosophy that can underpin our teaching practice and encourage us, among so many attributes, to meet laughter and the ability to laugh at oneself. Can we laugh at ourselves and our subjects? Can we laugh with our students? Can we have fun while teaching? Can we say and at the same time play with what we say? Can we transform the school into a more joyful and pleasurable place? Could a teacher also be a fool?

Sharing his experience as a clown-teacher, the author Frederico Ferreira (2017) wrote about how he finds in laughter a possibility of action within the school that transgresses the hierarchy of educational institutions. He and Ana Wuo point out that "the clown figure plays with institutional affairs, emptying, by laughter, and art, the hardened, imprisoned, cloistered, and crystallized concepts of traditional education" (Ferreira, Wuo, 2017, p. 102). The author invites us to reflect on the critical spirit of the "clown figure" and its condition of moving what is established in the school



through laughter, providing the opportunity to create new rules and relationships between teachers and students.

By proposing laughter as self-irony, Larrosa (2010) refers us to a thought that, by laughing at itself, calls into question what it says. Thus, it makes the always shifting certainty, the investigation of the world, the research, the invention, that is, the class, a space for the creation of playful thoughts that resonate with laughter as a way of never sacralizing them and, therefore, subject to questioning and collective constructions.

Teachers lack, perhaps irremediably, that aristocracy of spirit, that fineness of spirit, that lightness that thought still had when it was not a monopoly of teachers, when it had not yet been contaminated by that pedagogical, moralizing, solemn, dogmatic and somewhat crude austerity that is typical of the professorial tone. Perhaps we should stop being teachers to learn to formulate a thought whose interior resonates, unembarrassedly, laughter (Larrosa, 2010, p. 168).

During clowning classes, we practice playing with our bodies, attitudes and personalities to find experiences that provoke laughter as part of human experience. There is, as a basis of the clown philosophies that I have studied, the certainty that we are ridiculous beings, precisely because we are human beings. When an audience sees clowns on stage, they can face the laughable dimension of their existence. We fumble, we make mistakes, we stumble, we have inverted logic, we make gaffes and laugh, as part of life. And why can't we also assume this human dimension as teachers?

Clown teacher Sue Morrison has as one of the central principles of her work the knowledge derived from North American indigenous communities that says that, by discovering the different directions of ourselves, we can laugh at the beauty of our ridicule (Coburn, Morrison, 2013, p. 14). During her clowning course, we learn to unveil aspects of our personality so that we can play with them on stage, laugh at our own tragicomic experiences, praise our funny way of thinking and acting. In the same way, Cristiane Paoli Quito tells us that those who play with clowning "must accept being ridiculous, have fun with it, delight, taking advantage of this condition to be able to bring laughter, laughter, emotion and enchantment to the audience" (Gaulier, 2016, p. 26). Wouldn't this also be a possibility of experience for us, as teachers? In this sense, what would it mean to exercise the delight of ridicule in our formations? After all, if I cannot laugh and joke with myself, will I be able to joke with the students?

It is also important to think that the laughter we are referring to is not just laughter that relieves, that distracts workers and students so that they continue to be exploited. I do not seek, as a clown-teacher, laughter that deadens, that sweetens the pill, that proposes the facilitation of the contents for a better understanding of the students. I don't want a reinforcing laugh, as an extension of pedagogical thinking, but a laugh of rupture, of criticism of an educational system that does not contemplate us. As a teacher, I seek in the transgressive figure of the clown, the laughter and humor that call into question the school structure itself, which reflect on the direction that the school has



taken and the form of organization of a society based on work and productivity. For, as Guilherme Corrêa teaches us:

Humor and laughter can expand and elevate pedagogical praxis, but not to reform it and make it more palatable amid bourgeois coldness and technocracy (Gruschka, 2014), but to contribute to the realization of a truly creative and emancipatory pedagogical praxis (Corrêa, 2019, p. 101).

But it is not only morality that prevents us from exercising laughter, joy, and humor with our students. Bell hooks shows us that the social context and oppressive relations also contribute to the creation of a teacher figure who has difficulty allowing humor to permeate his practice. When entering graduate school, the author says that the sexist and racist environment demanded that she be even more serious, since she had to fight against a structure that tried to invalidate her and demanded that she constantly prove her ability to occupy that place. "It was important to be noticed as a person capable of conducting academic work. When race and class were added to the equation, for a black woman it was even more vital to adopt a serious *Persona*" (HOOKS, 2020, p. 118, emphasis added). Provoked by bell, I realize, as a white man, that it is socially accepted that I am a funny, entertaining teacher. In the same way, when I observe the students, I see that boys are allowed to play, to make jokes, to do crazy things and say nonsense, more than girls.

During my master's classes in the discipline of "Research Seminar" at the Institute of Arts of Unesp, I met with Professor Gilvânia Santos<sup>1</sup>. When I shared some reflections from my research during class, she told us about how difficult it was to allow herself to be less "serious" as a black teacher when teaching elementary and high school, given that she had countless times experienced situations of racism and disrespect from students, who uttered laughter and racist jokes in her classes. Who is allowed to act funny inside the school? Which bodies are targets of laughter in the school environment?

Since laughter is part of the process of creating a clown-teacher figure, it is also necessary to ask ourselves: is our laughter at school helping to dismantle the oppressive structures of power or is it reinforcing them?

If, on the one hand, we can perceive the absence of laughter and humor in the construction of the teaching figure and traditional pedagogical thinking, on the other hand, we cannot affirm that laughter is not present within school. But to create a school in which common laughter is possible, laughter that laughs with and does not laugh from, it is essential that we fight to create an educational environment in which laughter derived from prejudice is combated. As bell hooks states, "when humor is used by either a teacher or students to hurt or hurt, it is the responsibility of

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<sup>1</sup>PhD student in Art Education at the Institute of Arts of Unesp and Master in Art at the same Institute, where she developed the research: SILVA, Gilvânia Santos. *Between the kitchen and the classroom: possible paths for an anti-racist teaching of art in public schools*. 2023. Thesis (Master's Degree in Arts) - Institute of Arts, São Paulo State University, São Paulo, São Paulo, 2023. Available at: <https://repositorio.unesp.br/entities/publication/1559d782-f5da-45f8-a160-0f35f8a05ab6>. Accessed at: 24 Nov. 2025.

everyone in the classroom to find ways to recognize what happened and work to fix this violation of classroom policy" (hooks, 2020, p. 124).

According to Adilson Moreira (2020), laughter is one of the structural elements that maintain racism. Racist humor is part of a "project of domination", conceptualized by the author as "recreational racism", referring to a type of racial oppression that aims to "legitimize racial hierarchies present in Brazilian society so that social opportunities remain in the hands of white people" (Moreira, 2020, p. 31). Racist humor takes the racial identity of whiteness as a universal parameter (Moreira, 2020, p. 56), subjugating other racial groups, affirming "White identity as an expression of moral superiority" (Moreira, 2020, p. 90). This type of humor is very present in our schools, as a reflection of a project of society, both in the attitudes of students and teachers. In this case, laughter appears as a form of perpetuation of power, demonstrating a conservative rather than transgressive character.

Nevertheless, we can go in search, as clown-teachers, of subversive laughter, of laughter that shakes the structures instead of reaffirming them. A laugh that laughs together, that recalls the pleasures of learning life and that transforms the school environment into a space for the celebration of diversity. A laughter of teachers who, when playing with themselves, also promote collective games, finding in joy and humor their healing power. Laughter and joy become, therefore, survival strategies in this neoliberal capitalist world, especially within the school.

"The pleasure of teaching is an act of resistance that is opposed to the omnipresent boredom, disinterest, and apathy that so characterize the way teachers and students feel about learning and teaching, about the classroom experience" (hooks, 2017, p. 21). In this sense pronounced by bell hooks, laughter, joy, and humor are collective constructions that connect us and become revolutionary in a demotivating school that reveals the displeasure of students and teachers in inhabiting it.

However, beyond morality and the contexts of gender and ethnicity, there are also structural issues that hinder joy and laughter in our pedagogical practice. There are many dissatisfactions that we experience in our profession. How will we be able to create pleasurable and joyful classes with professional devaluation and low salaries? How will we maintain joy in our practice under constant attacks on public education, attempts at privatization, and increasing cuts in rights? How to exercise laughter and joy if our health is compromised?

When we think about the health of education professionals, we are faced with alarming numbers, reflections of unhealthy working conditions. According to Gadotti (2003), a survey conducted with educators by the CNTE (National Confederation of Education Workers), coordinated by Wanderley Codo in 1999, revealed "the emotional exhaustion [of teachers] caused by the increase in the number of jobs and by the depersonalization caused by their low social valuation and reduced personal fulfillment" (Gadotti, 2003, p. 52).



In the same direction, another survey completed by teacher Juçara Vieira in 2017, with basic education teachers from public schools, found that the six main situations that impact their health are: "accumulation of positions, functions or activities – 66.2%; students' learning difficulties – 56.1%; moral harassment for ideological reasons – 54.6%; lack or precariousness of pedagogical material – 53.5%; excessive working hours – 51.8% and excessive number of students per class – 51.8%" (Vieira, 2018, p. 27). Moreover, the investigation proved that Burnout Syndrome continues to affect education professionals due to material, mental, and psychological pressures. It also highlights that anxiety is the main symptom of illness in the answers of the professionals studied (72.7%), followed by "tiredness and fatigue (68.4%), voice problems (67.7%), pain in the arms (61.7%), and headache (59.3%)" (Vieira, 2018, p. 27).

A recent master's research conducted by Raphaela Gonçalves (2023), at the Institute of Health and Society at Unifesp, concluded that one in three basic education professionals are affected by Burnout Syndrome. The author states that:

There is an imbalance between the demands required of the teacher (such as performance, good work, good training) and the reward received, evidencing the devaluation of the profession and making them increasingly see the need to work in more than one place to make up their monthly income and meet their basic needs. (Gonçalves, 2023, p. 11).

These studies conducted over the last 25 years reveal that, as teachers, we live the exhaustion caused by capitalist exploitation, aggravated by the overcrowding of classrooms, low salaries, long working hours, and inadequate physical structures of schools. The data shared above prove that the disrespect for the teaching profession and the very colonial structure of our educational institutions contribute to our dissatisfaction and consequent decrease in joy in our daily work. In this sense, we can think that the sadness and illness of the teaching staff is a political project of co-opting our vital force and weakening our conditions to fight for an education with vivacity and pleasure.

Nevertheless, clowning can show us that, despite all this, joy is also the path of struggle itself, which needs to be created in collective spaces, and can act not only as a cure and relief from the daily massacre, but as a political tool of strengthening. For, as Guilherme Corrêa states, "class struggle and education are too serious processes to dispute without the spiritual vivacity provoked by humor and laughter, especially when it comes to putting in check the (provisional) victories of the dominant" (Corrêa, 2019, p. 92).

Vanessa Rosa (2023), in her studies on black comedy, teaches us that laughter and joy are "technologies of Afro-diasporic survival" (2023, p. 6) and that the joy present in Yorubá-Nagô culture "manifests itself in a liturgical way in rhythm and corporality" (2023, p. 28). Based on the knowledge of Professor Muniz Sodré, who points to joy as the "harmonious rule of affections" (2023, p. 28), Vanessa shows joy as "a foundation that acts in order to boost life, in the science of the here and now, establishing an understanding of facts not as an end, but, on the contrary, sees resilience as a motive" (Rosa, 2023, p. 28). Joy shows itself, for this wisdom, as a boost in life.

By being inspired by this Afro-Brazilian knowledge that makes me revisit my practices as a clown and teacher, I think that clowning training can create micro-revolutions of joy, even in the face of the hardships that are presented in the school context, with laughter and humor that recover part of the liveliness belonging to the excitement of teaching and learning. Training can be moments of suspension of productivity for the search for the collective construction of joy, which appears in this process as an invigorating foundation of resilience, in moments of rest, of looking at oneself, of humanization and of care.

The awareness that joy also permeates difficult processes makes me realize that, even with the precariousness of our professions and the arduous struggle we must face, we can do it with joy, clinging to our co-workers and, especially, to our students. If the clown is the joy of the circus, would clown-teachers be the joy of the school?

How, then, to break with the colonial boring in such an imprisoning structure? There are no formulas. Thinking about spaces for training and collective strengthening within our schools can be a first step. Being inspired by Brazilian festivals and the collective joys of carnival, ox festivals, seahorses, coconut and jongo circles, can be another step. Learning to play with children may be the third. Learning to play laugh at life with clowns can be the fourth. And a fifth step may be to start asking ourselves: is this class I'm living in exciting for me? Where is the excitement, the joy, the life, in the topics I chose to teach? Why do pedagogical meetings need to be so boring? What are the structural issues that prevent joy in our daily lives? How can we collectively fight the structures that do not contemplate us? Where is the joy inside me? How do I share these issues with students and my co-workers so that excitement in the classroom is a collective process?

I reaffirm: enthusiasm, excitement, laughter, and joy are collective tasks within the school. Therefore, this work cannot fall as a burden on the teaching figure, as if it depended exclusively on the teachers that a class is exciting. Sharing with us the difficulties he faced with a class of students, bell hooks wrote that mutual engagement is necessary for the path we want to build. "This class, more than any other, led me to abandon once and for all the idea that the teacher, by the sheer force of his will and desire, is capable of making the classroom an enthusiastic learning community" (2017, p. 19). Because, according to her, "enthusiasm is generated by collective effort" (2017, p. 18). Thus, many factors need to be articulated for a class to be pleasurable, and deep engagement and collaboration between students and teachers is necessary for it to happen.

Allowing laughter and joy to be at the heart of the construction of educational thinking does not mean that the path of learning is always a path of ease, of the positive, of the peacefulness. But, despite being an arduous path, there is also pleasure in going through it. Therefore, valuing fun in teaching does not represent the constant attempt to make the class "cool". But that learning, which is difficult, because it requires relocation, dedication, and commitment, can also be fun. As Paulo Freire told us, "It is also false to take teaching seriousness and joy as irreconcilable, as if joy were the enemy of rigor. On the contrary, the more methodically rigorous I become in my search and in my teaching, the happier and more hopeful I also feel" (2020, p. 139).

Permeating our practice of joy mainly suggests that the school does not need to correspond to the Jesuit colonial boring of the educational model. Or even to the neoliberal pretension of a school guided by the demands of the world of work. It is urgent that we join our students with joy and rigor so that, laughing until we lose our breath, we ask ourselves: What are the classes we want like? What is the school that we are going to build together?

#### **4 Final words: fools that we are, let's show our teeth**

Certainly, the teacher who wants to gain space for joy and clowning to take over his or her work, will face a hard fight against the conservative ideals instituted, not only by the school structure and hierarchy, but also by employees, co-workers, teachers, students, family members, and managers, who act as watchdogs for the maintenance of the conservative education system. It is necessary, therefore, to think about collective formative processes that study and experience, with practical exercises, joy to revisit the teaching practice. In this sense, clowning exercises are shown as a possibility of initial and continuing training of teachers. Together, we can work on joy and enthusiasm so that, playing as clowns in our training, we can recover part of the meaning and pleasure of school in us, to exercise them also with our students.

If, on the one hand, the public school presents multiple challenges for our performance, it is also these impasses experienced by the educational structure and in the relationship with the students that move our creative practice towards a transformative action. Acting in the cracks and crevices of this educational system with a clownish conception of teaching allows us, by reconstructing our teacherial image, to invent ways to resist the dominant system that insists on oppressing us.

It is a fundamental condition for this work to happen, the struggle for structural changes in the school that causes our illness. In this sense, a possible path is the creation of spaces for teacher training that promote the suspension of productivity so that we can look at our experiences, establish reflections, and collectively build the school we want. And so, together, perhaps we can fight for the reduction of students per class, for the reduction of working hours, for the appreciation of our salaries, for the increase in collective training hours, and to reform of our school spaces.

Having laughter and joy as fundamentals that shake conservative school structures, we can experience the philosophies and practices of clowning in our formations as a way of strengthening and liveliness of our bodies. With this, we value the creation of a comic faculty that laughs at itself and its incompleteness, that plays, that has fun with itself, that accepts itself as it is, that takes pleasure in being on the margins, that seeks its own path of existence, diverse, and that lives joy in the classroom as a collective capacity for life politics.



The proposal is to keep exercising clowning without romanticism and being pierced by challenges, showing our teeth, against Paulo Freire. He awaits us, in the middle of the schoolyard, with open arms and with a huge smile on his face, so that we can sing, celebrate, laugh and profane what he wrote: “joy does not come only in the finding of the find, but is part of the process of searching. And teaching and learning cannot take place outside of search, outside of beauty, and joy” (Freire, 2020, p. 139).



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