

Jennie Plate BLOMBERG

jennie.plate.blomberg@sh.se

Södertörn University, Sweden



The Affective Economy of Boredom - Teachers Practical Knowledge of Boredom as “Sticky”

Every week, several lessons a day, teachers (like myself) try to read their pupils: their facial and bodily expressions, their interactions with each other and the teacher, their sounds and utterances, their reactions to what the teacher is presenting them with, etcetera. We read them in order to see, not only if they have understood the lecture, or the assignment etcetera, but also to comprehend the emotions that are circling the classroom. Is s/he excited, tired, curious, dissatisfied? Or maybe bored? We read, and based on present and previous experiences we adjust our practice in action. In my ongoing dissertation project in the theory of practical knowledge I investigate upper secondary school teacher's lived experience of boredom. One of my main questions is: how do teachers react to (seemingly) bored pupils and what do they do in the present situation? In the planned presentation I explore boredom not as an emotion that comes from within the teacher, nor from the pupils, but as an emotion that circulates the classroom. Influenced by Karl Marx's thoughts on economy, Sara Ahmed considers emotions to be an affective economy. Emotions work as a form of capital and its value increases by circulation. Studying different kinds of texts she focuses on how emotions move “sideways (through ‘sticky’ associations between signs, figures, and objects), as well as backwards (repression leaves its trace in the present - hence ‘what sticks’ is also bound up with the ‘absent presence’ of historicity)” (Ahmed, *Affective Economies*, 2004, p. 120) Borrowing Ahmed's thoughts on emotions as sticky and starting from my interviewees first hand experience of boredom I will investigate how boredom circulate the classroom and what it does to a teacher's professional practice. I suggest that boredom circulate by moving sideways through sticky associations with, i) signs (in particular the concepts of ‘pupil’ and ‘teacher’ where ‘pupils’ are being read as immature, and having a short attention span), ii) objects (pupils and their bodily expressions of assumed boredom, e.g. yawning, sighing, fiddling their cellphones), iii) and spatiality (in particular the classroom as part of an old

institution and ideas on how teaching is supposed to be conducted). These three aspects are interconnected, and intertwined with “the ‘absent presence’ of historicity” in which teacher’s practical knowledge - their embodied, tacit knowledge of pupil’s boredom - takes center stage. I go on to conclude that the circulating boredom aligns teacher’s practices with our contemporary need for entertainment. They are shortening their lectures, handing over their creativity to digital aids, and have constant preparedness for an increasing boredom.