

PRECARITY AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

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Abstract

This paper explores the concept of precarity and its relevance for physical education. I argue that precarity is closely related to neoliberal practices of privatization and free-markets, and that these practices have been exerting an influence on physical education for some time. As the digitization of education gains momentum, I suggest physical educators cannot afford to be complacent about their future place in the school curriculum. Nor can they ignore the rise of precarity and its detrimental influence on the young people they teach. Physical educators have long argued that they make a contribution to young people's affective development, in terms of their motivation, resilience, cooperation and interest. Arguably, in the face of rising precarity and its ill effects on young people's mental health and wellbeing, there is a need for physical educators to develop 'pedagogies of affect', that take affective learning as its main concern. Teachers themselves may become victims of precarity as education in the Global North, once regarded as a mainly public good, increasingly is privatised. The neoliberal imperative to maximise profit at whatever cost to human wellbeing could result in teachers' working conditions deteriorating, further adding to what is for many an already high stress occupation. I conclude that we may need to rethink the critical pedagogy project in an age of precarity.

Keywords: Education; Physical Education; Precarity

Precariedade e Educação Física

Resumo

Este artigo explora o conceito de precariedade e sua relevância para a Educação Física. Argumento que a precariedade está intimamente relacionada às práticas neoliberais de privatização e livre mercado, e que essas práticas exercem influência sobre a Educação Física há algum tempo. À medida que a digitalização da educação ganha impulso, sugiro que os educadores físicos não possam se dar ao luxo de ser complacentes em relação ao seu futuro lugar no currículo escolar. Nem podem ignorar o aumento da precariedade e sua influência prejudicial sobre os jovens que ensinam. Os educadores físicos argumentam que contribuem para o desenvolvimento afetivo dos jovens, em termos de motivação, resiliência, cooperação e interesse. Indiscutivelmente, em face da crescente precariedade e seus efeitos nocivos sobre a saúde mental e o bem-estar dos jovens, há uma necessidade de educadores físicos desenvolverem "pedagogias do afeto", que tomam a aprendizagem afetiva como sua principal preocupação. Os próprios professores podem se tornar vítimas da precariedade, já que a educação no Norte Global, antes considerada como um bem principalmente público, é cada vez mais privatizada. O imperativo neoliberal de maximizar o lucro a qualquer custo para o bem-estar humano poderia resultar em deterioração das condições de trabalho dos professores, aumentando ainda mais o que já é para muitos uma ocupação de alto estresse. Concluo que talvez precisemos repensar o projeto de pedagogia crítica em uma era de precariedade.

Palavras-chaves: Educação; Educação Física; Precariedade.

Precaridad y Educación Física

Resumen

Este artículo explora el concepto de precariedad y su relevancia para la Educación Física. Argumento que la precariedad está íntimamente relacionada a las prácticas neoliberales de privatización y libre mercado, y que esas prácticas ejercen influencia sobre la Educación Física desde hace algún tiempo. A medida que la digitalización de la educación gana impulso, sugiero que los educadores físicos no puedan darse el lujo de ser complacientes en relación a su futuro lugar en el currículo escolar. No pueden ignorar el aumento de la precariedad y su influencia perjudicial sobre los jóvenes que enseñan. Los educadores físicos argumentan que contribuyen al desarrollo afectivo de los jóvenes, en términos de motivación, resiliencia, cooperación e interés. Indiscutiblemente, ante la creciente precariedad y sus efectos nocivos sobre la salud mental y el bienestar de los jóvenes, hay una necesidad de educadores físicos para desarrollar "pedagogías del afecto", que toman el aprendizaje afectivo como su principal preocupación. Los propios profesores pueden convertirse en víctimas de la precariedad, ya que la educación en el Norte Global, antes considerada como un bien público, es cada vez más privatizada. El imperativo neoliberal de maximizar el beneficio a cualquier costo para el bienestar humano podría resultar en deterioro de las condiciones de trabajo de los profesores, aumentando aún más lo que ya es para muchos una ocupación de alto estrés. Concluyo que tal vez necesitamos repensar el proyecto de pedagogía crítica en una era de precariedad.

Palabras clave: Educación; Educación Física; Precariedad.

Introduction

When we describe a situation as ‘precarious’, we mean that it is uncertain or unstable. To be in a precarious situation is risky and hazardous. We have a wide range of expressions in the English language to describe precarious situations. We say something is ‘hanging by a thread’, or that it is ‘on the slippery slope’, or someone is ‘skating on thin ice’, or ‘teetering on the brink’. Each of these expressions conveys the delicate tension that is at the heart of precariousness. When a situation is precarious, it might ‘go either way’. One way is clearly undesirable, possibly disastrous: we can imagine a vase perched precariously on a shelf. If it topples over it may be smashed to pieces on the floor. Another possibility is that the status quo prevails. The vase doesn’t topple, it remains on the shelf, teetering perhaps, but intact. Or perhaps we take action to secure it, to make its situation more stable and certain, and less precarious, by moving it back from the edge.

While this notion of precariousness is familiar to us, the idea of precarity may be less so. Precarity is widely used in the social sciences and humanities to refer to life situations or indeed lifestyles that are precarious: uncertain, unstable, risky and hazardous. To say that someone lives in precarity is to say that they live with uncertainty and instability. Unlike the vase teetering on the edge of a shelf, however, to live in precarity is in itself an undesirable situation. Even if an individual doesn’t succumb to disaster, to live teetering on the edge of something risky and hazardous is far from an ideal way to live. To live in precarity is by definition to live in a situation that does not promote wellbeing. As such, to live in precarity is in all probability not good for our health.

Precarity is a concept that should be of interest to physical educators. While the ways in which physical educators have thought about their contribution to health have changed over the years health

has always been an important part of the rationale for school physical education. Wellbeing may be a relatively new concept when we talk about schooling and health (Thorburn, 2018), but it too has been implicit in much of the talk about physical education as an area of the school curriculum, not least in terms of contributing to the ‘education of the whole person’. If living in precarity is by definition to live a life in which health is in jeopardy, in which being well is unlikely, then this is a situation physical educators need to know about and understand.

As it happens, recent research reveals that increasing numbers of children and young people are living in precarity. This is a relatively new phenomenon in the Global North of post-industrial nations. Of course, there have always been children and young people living in poverty, who are multiply-deprived, though they have seldom been well-served by school physical education. Precarity describes an acceleration and accentuation of the detrimental effects of living in poverty, particularly in relation to mental health and wellbeing, as well as the proliferation of these effects among the population. Such is the extent of the growth of the numbers of people living in precarity, social scientist Guy Standing (2016) has suggested that a new social class is emerging which he calls the ‘precariat’. It is highly likely that many physical educators will, in the course of the next 20 years of their careers, encounter increasing numbers children and young people living in precarity. Teachers themselves may experience precarity directly as teaching increasingly is a stressful occupation, as employment conditions for teachers change (Lincove et al, 2018), or as their jobs disappear due to advances in digital technology (Gard, 2014), with consequent effects on their own health and wellbeing.

For many social scientists, precarity is an outcome of neoliberal labour markets, of the ‘flexible’, temporary, short-term, indeterminate employment that characterises free-market capitalism. Whether or not we choose to characterise neoliberalism in a pejorative light (Springer, Birch and MacLeavy, 2016), there is no question that precarity’s referents are primarily undesirable and to be avoided. Precarity is unmistakably an outcome of economic policies in the labour market that assume greater economic efficiency requires flexible labour, frequently manifest in zero-hours, short-term and temporary contracts and consequent periods of unemployment.

Precarity and the precariat

It became clear that precarity is everywhere today. In the private sector, but also in the public sector, which has multiplied temporary and indeterminate positions, in industrial enterprises, but also in the institutions of production and cultural diffusion, education, journalism, media, etc., where it produces effects which are always more or less identical, which become particularly visible in the extreme case of the unemployed: the deconstruction of existence, deprived among other things of its temporal structures, and the degradation of the whole relation to the world, time, space, which ensues. Precarity is deeply affects those who suffer it; by making the

future uncertain, it forbids any rational anticipation and, in particular, that minimum of belief and hope in the future that must be had to revolt, especially collectively, against the present, even the most intolerable (Bourdieu, 1997).

Bourdieu's description of *précarité* highlights the relationship between unstable work and the wellbeing of individuals who experience it. For most research on precarity, this relationship is the common denominator, particularly in countries of the Global North. Precarity ties closely to neoliberalism. While clearly the concept existed in the work of French academics in the 1990s, it emerged into public view 'as the central organising platform for a series of social struggles' in the early 2000s in Italy (Neilson and Rossiter, 2008, p.51), spreading soon after as part of traditional May Day events across Europe and then to Japan (Standing, 2016). Young people drove the early phase of these social protest movements, demanding free migration and universal basic income, and impatient with traditional trade unionism.

Although the social movements faltered before the end of the decade, this notion of precarity of describing not only temporary and indeterminate work, but also the detrimental psychological effects of insecure employment had become more visible beyond political science and protest movements. For example, Swedish political scientists Näsström and Kalm (2015) argued that the effects of precarity are felt far beyond the workplace, noting that "precarious work not only affects the material side of life; it also affects the soul [...] and character [...] of workers, including one's sense of happiness, meaning and ability to develop long-term relationships" (p.563).

Recently published research demonstrates the heterogeneity of those affected by precarity, with populations that 'veer wildly' (Berlant, 2011, p. 192) across occupations, age groups and societies. Precarity is a referent for the labour casualization of youth in Japan (Smith, 2018), of school to work transition in Sweden (Dovemark & Beach, 2016), Germany (Eckelt, 2015) and Japan (Inui, 2015) and young knowledge workers in Italy (Armano, 2016). While precarity is widely held to affect young people in particular, it also features for some in later life as new forms of risk and insecurity (Grenier et al., 2017). Additionally, researchers find precarity among asylum seekers in Australia (van Kooy, 2018), guest workers in US tourism (Terry, 2018), market vendors in Ottawa (Kovesi, 2018), immigrant men and women in Toronto (Premji, 2018), highly educated migrants in Beijing (Wang, 2017), and among workers in the manufacturing and high tech strongholds of the Netherlands (Ballafkih, 2017) and Germany (Brady, 2017).

Anthropologist Eli Thorkelson (2016) suggests this mainly Anglophone research that has emerged since the mid-2000s has sought to specify, "precarity's referent, aiming to clarify which things in the world the concept designates" (p.476). While Thorkelson acknowledges and accepts the association of precarity with indeterminate work and its detrimental effects on wellbeing, he cautions

against accepting universalizing claims about precarity. He points out that in France and in the context of struggles around higher education in 2009, *précarité* also served several covert political functions for some of its users, one of which was to differentiate self from others, to distinguish ‘them’ that experience *précarité* from ‘us’ that don’t. He points out, too, echoing fellow anthropologist Kathleen Millar, that precarity can only refer to “states of anxiety, desperation, unbelonging, and risk experienced by temporary and irregularly employed workers” (Millar, 2014, p.34) where a post-Fordist or Keynesian norm of stable employment and expectation of a ‘good life’ survives. According to Noelle Mole (2010), in Italy individual workers’ explicit identification with being a *precariat*, a precarious worker, rested on a view of neoliberal capitalism and its effects as in process and unfinished. Identification with the precariousness of employment and its ill effects was for these Italian workers a form of resistance to the erosion of traditional, stable employment and state-provided services. On the other hand, in places where this notion of stability and expectation of a good life no longer apply, such as among the wageless *catadores* who recycled waste material from Rio de Janeiro’s dump, the notion of precarity has little purchase (Millar, 2014, p.49).

Lauren Berlant (2011) has advanced the notion of ‘cruel optimism’ as a means of making clearer precarity’s effects on the individuals who experience it. Berlant explains that in the Global North, there is a widespread belief that hard work and good behaviour will be duly rewarded, and that the ‘good life’ of economic and emotional security is as a result attainable. Echoing Thorkelson’s scepticism about the universality of precarity as an empirical referent, Berlant (2011) nevertheless accepts that “capitalist activity always induces destabilizing scenes of productive destruction – of resources and lives being made and unmade according to the dictates and whims of the market. But (...) neoliberal economic practices mobilize this instability in unprecedented ways”. (p.192) In such circumstances, precarity is a condition of dependency, where our fate is in someone else’s hands. She notes the widespread expectation of the good life began to be undermined in the Global North from the 1980s. Indeed, in the face of repeating and increasingly regular social and economic crises over the past 40 years, these expectations become a form of cruel optimism because they create the desire for ways of life that, she claims, are no longer possible. Moreover, this desire at the same time becomes an obstacle to other possible forms of human flourishing.

Millar provides an example from her case study in the Global South, of *catadores* in Rio’s dump, where hope of the good life is already unsustainable, and thus precarity in the Anglophone sense has little traction as an empirical referent.

In the moment that Rose leaves her job to go back to the dump, she lets go of the employment contract and of the organization, subjectivities, and relations of work that it entails. I see in this act of release a politics of detachment that is quite different from the politics of precarity inspired by what

Guy Standing (2011, 19) has called the precariat's "four A's— anger, anomie, anxiety, and alienation." Especially in post-Fordist contexts of the global North, these affective states and the politics (or anti-politics) of hopelessness that they activate emerge from the continued attachment to an imagined good life (...) In contrast, Rose's act of quitting her job entails a rupture with normative forms of capitalist labor that opens up the possibility of other ways of fashioning work and life (p.49).

These are important qualifications of the notion of precarity and the temptation to universalise its application to all of neoliberalism's nefarious workings wherever we find them. We need to understand the situations and experiences in the world that precarity describes and those it does not. The notion that hard work and good behaviour should be rewarded by career progression, economic security and emotional intimacy and stability may be, as Berlant argues, increasingly difficult to sustain in countries that make up the Global North. But this 'fantasy', as she describes it, retains much of its traction still, and no-where less so that in education (Ball, 2017). It is primarily through schooling and within the family that this desire for and expectation of the good life is created and sustained. This is why it is a matter of such importance that physical educators understand what precarity might usefully refer to and its significance to the work they do with young people on a day-to-day basis.

Guy Standing (2016) has argued that out of the Anglophone notion of precarity has emerged a new social class, the precariat, which he describes as 'the new dangerous class', for reasons we will explore shortly. The term precariat for Standing combines the notion of an underclass, a proletariat, with the situation of living precariously and close to necessity. If such a class does indeed exist, it is, according to Standing and to the many other researchers who have been studying precarity, like no other class before it. As Savage and his colleagues (2015) discovered, few people in Britain seem to want to admit they belong to the precariat. The rate of response to the Great British Class Survey from individuals who identified with this class was negligible, though we noted earlier Mole's research in Italy where to identify with the precariat is viewed as an act of resistance to neoliberal work practices.

The precariat in Standing's view is a class whose members share only a few characteristics, that they live precariously, in particular in terms of insecure employment and other factors affecting the accumulation of economic capital. Other shared characteristics are a sense of alienation and anomie, of unfulfilled expectations, and of hopelessness. It is the increasing prevalence of insecure employment and detrimental psycho-social effects since the 1980s in the post-industrial societies of the Global North that suggests to Standing, Savage and others that a new social class is emerging. As the recent research we noted earlier demonstrates, and with Thorkelson's and Miller's caveats notwithstanding, the precariat is highly heterogeneous, consisting not only of those who might traditionally be associated with an underclass such as unskilled workers, undocumented migrant labourers and so on. It contains

young and old, men and women, skilled and unskilled, in many countries, across a range of occupations including academe and the cultural industries. Standing explains:

The precariat could be described as a neologism that combines an adjective ‘precarious’ and a related noun ‘proletariat’ ... We may claim that the precariat is a *class-in-the-making*, if not yet a *class-for-itself*, in the Marxian sense of that term (Standing, 2016, p.8).

He, like Bourdieu and Näsström and Kalm, highlights the effects of insecure employment, such as ongoing temporary contracts and so-called ‘zero hours’ contracts, as well as chronic episodes of unemployment, on self-identity and wellbeing. He writes:

Another way of looking at the precariat is in terms of the process, the way in which people are ‘precaritised’... To be precariatized is to be subject to pressures and experiences that lead to a precariat existence, of living in the present, without a secure identity or sense of development achieved through work and lifestyle (Standing, 2016, p. 19).

In this respect, it is Bourdieu’s final point that is of particular interest, the possibility of what Standing calls the precariat as a new social class, a *class-in-itself*, being capable of taking collective action against the ill-effects of precarity, as a *class-for-itself*. The nature of precarity makes this possibility remote, however, since as we noted in the introduction to live precariously, to teeter on the brink of disaster, is not in itself conducive to wellbeing. The creation of a *class-for-itself* is less likely still when we consider the effects of digital technology of being trapped in the present:

The precariat shows itself as not yet a *class-for-itself* partly because those in it are unable to control the technological forces they face... The precariat is defined by short-termism, which could evolve into a mass incapacity to think long term. The internet, the browsing habit, text messaging, Facebook, Twitter and other social media are all operating to rewire the brain. (Standing, 2016, p. 21)

Recent research by Goodyear, Armour and Woods (2018) amplifies Standing’s concerns about the potential detrimental effects of social media use on the mental health and wellbeing of young people. This work also echoes Postman’s critique of the rise of television to replace print as a primary medium of communication in 1980s America. In his book *Amusing Ourselves to Death*, Postman cites the ‘Huxleyan Warning’, referring to Aldous Huxley’s dystopian novel *Brave New World* (1932). He writes:

What Huxley teaches is that in the age of advanced technology, spiritual devastation is more likely to come from an enemy with a smiling face than from one whose countenance exudes suspicion and hate. In the Huxleyan prophecy, Big Brother does

not watch us, by his choice. We watch him, by ours ... When a population becomes distracted by trivia, when cultural life is re-defined as a perpetual round of entertainments, when serious public conversation becomes a form of baby-talk, when, in short, a people become an audience and their public business a vaudeville act, then a nation finds itself at risk; culture-death is a clear possibility (Postman, 1985: 156).

A society distracted and sedated by social media trivia may be unlikely to have the resources to take political action on its own behalf. More contemporaneously, Näsström and Kalm (2015) suggest that precarity and its ill-effects are at odds with democratic forms of government, which rest on the principle of shared responsibility, and the conditions it creates corrupt democracy. This is in part why Standing describes the precariat as 'the dangerous new class'.

According to Wilkinson and Pickett (2009), there is a clear relationship between the level of inequality in a society, a key feature of precarity, and a range of social problems, including health and wellbeing. In a comparative analysis of a range of countries and social issues, they summarise their findings as follows:

Rates of mental illness are five times higher in the most unequal compared to the least unequal societies. Similarly, in more unequal societies people are five times as likely to be imprisoned, six times as likely to be clinically obese, and murder rates may be many times higher. The reason why these differences are so big is ... because the effects of inequality are not confined to the least well-off; instead they affect the vast majority of the population (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2009, p. 181).

This conclusion highlights the pervasive and inequitable influence of social turbulence and precarity. Not everyone needs to experience precarity directly to feel its effects. Young school-age people are particularly vulnerable since precarity shapes not only their health and wellbeing, as we discuss in chapter 3, but also their life chances. Education is widely perceived to be a means of facilitating social mobility, particularly in assisting young people to escape from poverty. It is of some importance then that education itself appears to have been impacted significantly by neoliberal practices.

Physical education, neoliberalism, precarity

In his landmark lecture 'Education for Sale!', Stephen Ball (2004) differentiates between two forms of commodifying education, endogenous and exogenous privatisation. Endogenous privatisation refers to traditional forms of public education adopting the practices, values and identities of private business and commerce. Exogenous privatisation involves private businesses external to the school delivering services formerly provided by schools or school districts themselves. Outsourcing is another term for exogenous privatisation, and has become widespread practice in many public services. As part of a wholesale commodification of education,

outsourcing is often founded on the contentious idea that external providers can deliver better services more cheaply than publically funded insiders. In some public services, this process results in the complete replacement of insider provision. Another contentious assumption is that outsourced services, while supposedly cheaper than traditional services, permit external providers to generate income and to take profits (Ball and Youdell, 2008; Penney and Mitchell, 2017).

In the last three decades, both forms of privatisation have become increasingly prominent and controversial features of what Ball (2017) calls *The Education Debate*, while Rizvi and Lingard (2010) argue that such debates are taking place in education systems globally. Privatisation of education is not confined to systems level policy but also impacts on specific areas of the curriculum. McCuaig et al. (2016) highlight the rise of what they call the physical and health ‘edu-business’ and the consequent erosion of the school’s social justice mission. Macdonald (2014) and Evans (2014) have framed these developments within the broad context of neoliberalism, both arguing that its rise and pervasive influence challenge health and physical educators to think differently about their field. Evans and Davies (2014) argue for more research to study relations *between* physical education and new forms of educational governance in the face of what they call ‘Physical Education PLC’. They also warn about the ways in which privatisation constructs forms of ‘neoliberal freedoms’ that radically reduce current educational entitlements of pupils (Evans and Davies, 2015). Williams et al. (2011) and Williams and Macdonald’s (2015) empirical work has shown the extent of outsourcing and its establishment as an institutionalised, widespread and accepted practice in health and physical education in the Australian State of Queensland, while Sperka and Enright’s (2017) review suggests this is now a global phenomenon.

This recent conceptual and empirical research on neoliberal practices such as privatisation and outsourcing has injected a new urgency into debates about current and future practices in health and physical education (Penney and Mitchell, 2017). At the same time, as Williams et al. (2011) note, in both thought and practice outsourcing of physical education as a particular neoliberal practice has been around for some time. Hoffman’s (1987) satirical ‘dreaming the impossible dream’ imagined a future for physical education run by a company called Pedasport with its P³ or ‘Pay-to-Play Program’. Hoffman’s chapter inspired Tinning (1992; 2001) similarly to imagine futures for physical education that involved commercialisation and outsourcing, only for him to realise in his later paper that this had already become a reality in Australia in the form of Tri-Skills, which in 2017 celebrated its 25th anniversary (<http://www.triskills.com.au/>). One of the earliest analyses of a commercialised curriculum package in physical education was *Daily Physical Education* which was created and marketed as a fitness and skill-based programme to schools across Australia in the early 1980s (Kirk and Colquhoun, 1989). As I noted in Kirk (2010), a magazine sent to the UK’s Association for Physical Education members

called *Future Fitness* regularly advertised to teachers the services of a range of private businesses such as Zig Zag, TriXter, Freddy Fit and Fit for Sport. Fitnessgram, developed by the Cooper Institute in the 1980s, probably has the most reach of any outsourced programme in health and physical education with its claim to be operating in tens of thousands of schools in the United States (<http://www.cooperinstitute.org/fitnessgram>). Landi, Fitzpatrick and Mcgalshan (2016) identify the SPARK-PE (McKenzie, Sallis, & Rosengard, 2009) programme as a manifestation of neoliberal practices in physical education.

In the 1980s and 1990s, outsourcing of services in health and physical education was unusual. In the early decades of the 21st century this is no longer the case as governments in some countries have sought to shrink the state and to apply bighting cuts to public services in the name of austerity (Evans, 2014). Markets have grown rapidly in a wide range of health and physical education services featuring programmes that schools can access, if they have the funding. This growth has also been fuelled by the so-called obesity crisis and more recently by concern over adolescent mental health, and the notion that schools are well-placed to ‘fix’ these problems (McCuaig et al, 2016).

The recent interest in neoliberal practices in health and physical education among the scholarly community is both appropriate and timely since the risks and dangers of commodifying education are real and potentially far-reaching. But this literature uniformly argues that practices such as outsourcing are far from simple commercial transactions in an educational marketplace. Indeed, as Macdonald (2014) among other has noted, there already has been ‘push-back’ from teachers and parents to proposals to privatise health and physical education provision in Australian schools. Echoing Macdonald, Evans has suggested that it is not the commercial transactions surrounding practices like outsourcing that are the most troubling feature. For him, it is a much less obvious and more insidious entry into the lives of young people of particularly ‘intrusive pedagogies’:

Despite its claim to providing new ‘freedoms’, neoliberalism presaged (...) increasingly intrusive pedagogies, involving, for example, centrally regulated self-monitoring and management of one’s own and others’ behaviour in respect of health. Indeed (...) the most fateful change unfolded in the past three decades has not been increased greed, but the expansion of neoliberal markets and market values into spheres of life where they do not belong. One has been repeatedly and relentlessly impelled to do for oneself what others (e.g. the WHO or private health industries) want, without being obviously coerced or told so to do (Evans, 2014, p. 549).

These ‘intrusive pedagogies’ are unlikely to be experienced equally or in the same ways by all young people. For those whose families have the right mix of economic, cultural and social capital, there will be resources at home and in their social networks that may help develop resilience to setbacks and unanticipated events. For those living in precarity, there may be no such resources beyond

the school. If the school itself is implicated in the neoliberal project then the outcome may be similar to Dovemark and beach's account of special programmes for 'manual' pupils in Swedish high schools:

What we (...) describe is a process of abandonment of a genuinely educational contract with these young people. Instead of being educated so they may develop mentally, morally, or aesthetically, they become educationally neglected, hidden, overlooked, dismissed, pitied, and quite literally de-valued. (...) School has perhaps become a site of precarisation for all individuals through its increasingly emphasised bonds to an unstable labour market, but for the students at the centre of the present investigation this is beyond question." (p.175) These kinds of students used to be able to learn for labour (Willis 1977). But what are they to learn for when there is no sustainable and sufficiently well-paid commodified labour left? Is it learning for marginality (...)? (Dovemark and Beach, p. 187)

Whether then they are the victims of intrusive pedagogies or overlooked and de-valued, the capture of education by neoliberal practices can only have negative consequences for young people's health and wellbeing and their life chances, in direct contradiction to what McCuaig and colleagues (2016) describe as the school's social justice mission. Dovemark and Beach suggest that with the emergence of precarity, the school's sifting and sorting role in assigning working class young people to working class jobs becomes even more problematic than it was previously. Given the paucity of economic, cultural and social resources available to young people living in precarity, school is probably the only chance they have for social mobility.

Conclusion

This paper has explored the concept of precarity and its possible relevance for physical education. There is no question that precarity is closely linked to neoliberal practices of privatization and free-markets, and that these practices have been exerting an influence on physical education for some time. As the digitization of education gains even further momentum (Gard, 2014; Goodyear et al., 2018), physical educators cannot afford to be complacent about their future place in the school curriculum. Nor can they ignore the rise of precarity and its detrimental influence on the young people they teach.

Physical educators have long argued that they make a contribution to young people's affective development, in terms of their motivation, resilience, cooperation and interest. Learning in the affective domain has been viewed, however, as a hoped-for by-product of the games and sports physical educators teach rather than an explicit outcome of their teaching. Arguably, in the face of rising precarity and its ill effects on young people's mental health and wellbeing, there is a need for physical educators to develop 'pedagogies of affect', that take affective learning as its main concern (Kirk, 2018).

This said, we should also heed Evans' warning, that some of these pedagogies of affect may also be 'intrusive'. At the same time, for some young people living in precarity, it may be that school is the only resource available to support them deal with the damaging influence of anomie, anger, anxiety and alienation.

Teachers themselves may become victims of precarity as education in the Global North, once regarded as a mainly public good, increasingly is privatised (Ball, 2017). In these circumstances, the neoliberal imperative to maximise profit at whatever cost to human wellbeing could result in teachers' working conditions deteriorating, further adding to what is for many an already high stress occupation. It may be that we need to rethink the critical pedagogy project in an age of precarity (Apple, 2013).

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