

## Physical Education, Critical Pedagogy and Precarity

### ABSTRACT

Brief conceptual introduction to the theme that guides this section, as well as briefly presenting the texts that compose it.

**KEYWORDS:** Physical education; Critical pedagogy; Precarity

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*Versão em lingua inglesa dos próprios autores*

## **Educação Física, pedagogia crítica e precariedade**

### **RESUMO**

Breve introdução conceitual à temática que orienta a presente seção, assim como apresenta, sumariamente, os textos que a compõem.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVE:** Educação física; Pedagogia crítica; Precariedade

## **Educación Física, pedagogia crítica y precariedad**

### **RESUMEN**

Breve introducción conceptual al tema que guía este apartado, así como una breve presentación de los textos que lo componen.

**PALABRAS-CLAVE:** Educación Física; Pedagogía crítica; Precariedad

This special issue is dedicated to the critical pedagogy of Physical Education. More precisely, it proposes to discuss what socially critical knowledge can do when presenting itself as a response to precarity as the epitome of contemporary society. Important social analysts, for some years now, have been dedicating their efforts to understand the causes of this phenomenon that affects not only the countries of the “global south”, but also those of the “global north”, where the economically richest nations are concentrated. According to Pierre Bourdieu (1998, p. 79), there is no doubt that precarity has spread through the global social fabric, whether in the private sector or in the public sector, producing more or less identical effects such as “[...] of private existence, among other things, of its temporal structures, and the degradation of the entire relationship with the world and, as a consequence, with time and space”.

For Bourdieu (1998), the causes of precarity are found in the intensification of neoliberal policies, especially their impacts on what Zygmunt Bauman (2001) characterized as the main value of modern times: work. According to this Polish sociologist, work would have ceased to be the main identity vector for people because, given the new contours of the productive forces, it assumed the mark of flexibilization, fragmentation and deregulation, no longer offering any secure axis around which people could construct and fix their life stories. Work (and its ethics), once the main architect of order as a task of modernity, would have moved from the realm of trust and stability, the result of the lasting union between employers and employees (between capital and labour, therefore), to the changeable environment, erratic, episodic and uncertain of the game, of fluidity, of liquidity (BAUMAN, 2001).

Another sociologist who has also located the origins of precarity in the transformations in the world of work is the Englishman Guy Standing (2014), who created the neologism “precariat” to refer to a new dangerous class, composed of many millions of people around the world. without a stability anchor. He follows (2014) saying that the precariat is defined by ephemerality, which can evolve into a mass incapacity for long-term thinking, induced by the low probability of personal progress or building a solid career. According to his interpretation, the precariat can be defined by the absence of seven forms of guarantee related to the world of work: 1) guarantee of the labor market; 2) guarantee of employment relationship; 3) job security; 4) work safety; 5) skill reproduction guarantee; 6) income security; 7) representation guarantee. The precariat, therefore, represents a form of domination that is based on the permanent institutionalization of insecurity with the aim of producing modes of subjectivation accommodated to exploitation.

Bourdieu, Bauman and Standing share the diagnosis that precarity has made it impossible to trust the future, as life is governed by a political economy of uncertainty that is daily manufactured, at the same time that people are required to provide biographical solutions to contradictions that are systemic, structural. This condition produces precarious lives that suffer from what Standing (2014) called the “Four As” – anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation.

Considering this diagnosis of the present time, authors of Physical Education have also addressed the effects of neoliberalism in the academic field and in the professional activity of the discipline (EVANS, 2014; EVANS; DAVIES, 2015; CHRIS; MOONEY, 2018; FITZPATRICK; POWELL, 2019; MACDONALD, 2014). Kirk (2018, 2020) suggested, in this context, discussing such impacts in the light of the concept of precarity, as this phenomenon affects not only the careers and work contexts of teachers themselves, but many students who arrive at schools experience

different discomforts, of the degrading experiences in which they live. Kirk (2018, 2020) went on to defend the need to rethink the project of critical pedagogy of Physical Education in this turbulent time, so that the discipline should produce critical pedagogies concerned with developing, particularly, the affective domain of students with the purpose of strengthening their motivation, resilience, cooperation and interest so that they are in more suitable circumstances to deal with the effects of precarity on their mental health and well-being. Echoing Standing's "Four A's", Kirk (2018, 2020) understands that the school can be a place to empower students to face the influence of anger, anomie, anxiety and alienation in their lives.

This special issue, therefore, assumes precarity as a key to discuss the role of a critical pedagogy of Physical Education in the face of the inequities of a productive system that wastes lives, deepens social inequality and increases extreme poverty in different parts of the world. To this end, we invite colleagues from different countries, all of them identified with socially critical knowledge in Physical Education in defense of social justice, with the aim of reflecting on what the discipline could do to transform, from its specificities, the current scenario, empowering children and adolescents who experience, in their daily lives, socially produced precarity. In other words, the authors must (re)consider the mission of the critical pedagogy of Physical Education in relation to precarity, an opportunity to even discuss what such pedagogy could do when posing as a response to this phenomenon.

"Opening" the special issue is the article by David Kirk entitled "Pedagogical narratives of physical education in times of precarity", an opportunity for the author to argue, given the change in meaning in the dominant narrative of physical education, that the social function of the discipline should be associated with the development of pedagogies of affect that aim to empower children and young people who live in conditions of precarity. In addition, the article offers a review on the presence of precarity in the physical education literature.

The following article, by Heidi Jancer Ferreira, Carla Luguetti and David Kirk, explores the results of two case studies developed in Brazil in precarious contexts. One of them based on a community sport program with young people in a context of social vulnerability, and the second one on a health promotion program with women, offered by SUS (Brazilian Public Health System). Inspired by Paulo Freire's thoughts and assumptions of a critical pedagogy of affect, the experiences show that inclusive, fair and equitable educational practices are essential to overcome the effects of precarity in people's lives.

Sidinei Pithan da Silva addresses the conditions of possibility of critical pedagogy in flexible/liquid modernity, occasion to extract implications from this context for teaching in Physical Education. According to his perspective, current legitimizing theoretical/political universe of critical pedagogy allows reinventing the discipline's foci, articulating aspirations for the emancipation of the excluded in terms of class, with the aspirations of new social movements that include identity and cultural agendas.

The article by Felipe Quintão de Almeida and Karen Lorena Gil Eusse, entitled "Critical pedagogy, health, and precarity: an interpretation from the Brazilian Physical Education's perspective", establishes an interlocution with David Kirk's proposition regarding critical pedagogy in times of precarity. After offering a description of Kirk's perspective, the authors discuss the arguments in light of the Brazilian experience of critical pedagogy.

Rod Philpot and Allan Ovens, in “Indigenous knowledge as part of a critical pedagogy against precarity in Health and Physical Education in Aotearoa New Zealand”, invites the readers to think about critical pedagogy in the light of indigenous knowledge and principles as an empowering strategy against the effects of precarity. Health and Physical Education practices underpinned by ancestral philosophy have the potential to reduce anger, anxiety, and alienation by strengthening connections among students, among students and teachers, with the land and emerging identities.

The special issue closes with Dillon Landi’s article entitled “Precarity, fitness testing and critical pedagogy: a response-able approach”. The author analyzes fitness testing to understand the production of vulnerability, instability, and insecurity in the academic field, with negative effects on the health and wellbeing experiences of young people. Landi argues that a critical pedagogical approach to physical education provides students with skills to respond to multiple precarities they face in their lives.

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