

LOCATING CRITICALITY IN POLICY: THE ONGOING STRUGGLE FOR A SOCIAL JUSTICE AGENDA IN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION

LOCALIZANDO A CRITICIDADE NA POLÍTICA: A CONTÍNUA LUTA POR JUSTIÇA SOCIAL NA AGENDA DA EDUCAÇÃO FÍSICA ESCOLAR

UBICANDO LA CRITICIDAD EN LA POLÍTICA: LA CONTINUA LUCHA POR JUSTÍCIA SOCIAL EN LA AGENDA DE LA EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA ESCOLAR

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Keywords:
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Abstract: There is a sense of unfulfilled promise as one reflects on the progress of the critical project in Physical Education (PE) at the turn of the second decade of the 21st century. Quality scholarship continues to emerge around critical pedagogy in PE, evidencing sustained commitment to its promise to provide learners with personal and intellectual resources needed in navigating productive healthy futures in an increasingly complex world. In this paper we discuss select examples of contemporary research to demonstrate ongoing struggles in practice-based contexts and revisit barriers that continue to restrict the translational aspirations of critical scholars. Focusing on PE as a cultural and curriculum practice in Australian schools, we give primacy to the ways in which policy directives might be better mobilised to enable the critical agenda.

Palavras chave:
Pedagogia crítica.
Educação Física.
Currículo.
Atores políticos.

Resumo: Há um sentimento de promessa não realizada quando se analisa o progresso do projeto crítico da Educação Física desde a virada da segunda década do século XXI. Estudos de qualidade continuam a emergir em torno da pedagogia crítica da Educação Física, evidenciando o prolongado comprometimento com sua promessa de fornecer aos aprendizes recursos pessoais e intelectuais que são necessários na orientação de produtivos futuros sadios num mundo cada mais complexo. Neste artigo nós discutimos destacados exemplos de investigações contemporâneas que demonstram as contínuas lutas em contextos práticos e revisita barreiras que continuam a restringir as aspirações dos estudos críticos. Focando na Educação Física como uma prática cultural e curricular nas escolas australianas, nós damos primazia aos modos pelos quais políticas diretivas podem ser melhor mobilizadas para capacitar a agenda crítica.

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Resumen: Hay un sentimiento de promesa no cumplida cuando se analiza el progreso del proyecto crítico de la Educación Física desde el giro de la segunda década del siglo XXI. Estudios de calidad continúan a emerger en torno a la pedagogía crítica de la Educación Física, evidenciando el prolongado compromiso con su promesa de ofrecer a los aprendices recursos personales e intelectuales que son necesarios en la orientación de productivos futuros saludables en un mundo cada vez más complejo. En ese artículo discutimos destacados ejemplos de investigaciones contemporáneas que demuestran las contínuas luchas en contextos práticos y revisita barreras que continúan restringiendo las aspiraciones de los discursos críticos. Con foco en la Educación Física como una práctica cultural y curricular en las escuelas australianas, priorizamos los modos por los cuales políticas directivas pueden ser mejor movilizadas para capacitar la agenda crítica.

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1 INTRODUCTION

On embarking on this paper, we were keen to look at the practical translation of the critical agenda in Physical Education (PE) from the perspective of it being a verb, rather than a noun. In its simplest form, a verb is a 'doing' word. While nouns are largely used to describe a *state* or *occurrence*, a key category of verbs is rooted in *action*. It is with a focus on action that we interrogate the impact of critical pedagogies in PE as a curriculum practice in schools. Driving us is the oft-held concern that the presence of a critical agenda for PE (and its alignment with social justice aims), exists overwhelmingly at a rhetorical and philosophic level. The more despairing commentaries tend to emerge where critical aspirations are rendered impotent by socio-political forces (often historical and contextual) that function to dilute their impact and preserve the status-quo. With a focus on 'doing', critical activations largely emanate from a desire to make changes to the status-quo to precipitate purposeful learning encounters for students and to challenge inequities. It seems, in circumstances where interventions appear to gain some traction, that interest in, and commitments to, criticality gain momentum. Included in the analyses of aspirational and translational critical incursions into PE in schools is a commentary, albeit sometimes implicit, on the relative appetite of young people to engage, or not, with critical agendas. In times where youth trajectories are increasingly framed within notions of precarity, it is appropriate to consider the value of critical pedagogies in PE (KIRK, 2019a), and revisit the role they might have in assisting young people to make-sense-of and/or navigate the socio-political-historical conditions that impact their life opportunities, and the opportunities of others.

With our line of sight on critical pedagogy, and criticality as its prerequisite disposition (TINNING, 2019), we contemplate a more active role for PE in helping young people make sense of a range of issues associated with contemporary constructions of health and well-being, and their discursive enactments. Our focus here is on how critical manifestations of PE pedagogy might be mobilized to offer subject positions that are inclusive and optimistic. As a conduit to movement proficiency, PE is often positioned as an institutional vehicle through which young people can develop personal and social resources that will allow them access to preferred or privileged forms of citizenship. The coupling of physical (often confounded with sporting) prowess and agency is often amplified around marginality, where it is idealised that the personal and social resources on offer support the agential reconstruction of 'flawed' identities. Through the lens of critical pedagogy, this paper explores how critical enactments of school-based PE might play a foundational role in disrupting some of the discourses that transport social injustices that subjectify some people as winners and others as losers.

In the carriage of our analysis of critical pedagogies in school-based PE we take as an entry point that readers have a reasonable working knowledge of the paradigmatic underpinnings of the critical educational project. While the focus of particular critical agendas, incursions and interventions has varied enormously across the data sets that comprise this field of inquiry, they are bound together by a shared interest in questioning socio-cultural injustices. Such injustices are transported in the dominant practices associated with physical and health cultures, and their instantiation of desirable and undesirable subject positions reified, albeit unwittingly, through schooling. Within this purview the organising lenses set up around this issue were originally orientated around social justice discourses associated with class, culture, race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, religion, age and physicality as classifications for marginalisation. While there are long-held concerns about the plausibility of truly implementing critical pedagogies in

mainstream schooling (LATHER, 1998) empirical accounts of critical engagement in real school settings have gone some way to continuing to promote pedagogical possibilities.

It is important to note that while it has its intellectual roots in Marxist ideologies, the relevance of the critical educational project has not diminished across time. Indeed, long time advocates of this agenda argue that within the contemporary forces of globalisation and neoliberalism the importance of this project is as pronounced as ever (GIROUX, 2019). This observation is mapped into PE wherein Azzarito *et al.* (2017) describe the increasing importance of a coherent social justice agenda to mediate contemporary social, cultural and political forces that have a systemic capacity to render the vulnerable, more vulnerable. These authors argue that in the absence of critical reflexivity, the institutional practice of PE is prone to the unwitting transportation of neoliberalist ideologies that privilege male, individualistic, white, middle class values. Azzarito *et al.* (2017), identify school-based PE as an important site for challenging such values through a lens of social justice. As subscribers to the critical agenda, we too espouse the potential for PE pedagogy to challenge such ideologies and how they are discursively ascribed within localising and globalising designations. The challenge, as we see it, lies in understanding mechanisms that position such approaches beyond an 'optional extra' for teacher's work, for as Tinning (1991) has argued, questions of pedagogy are fundamentally linked to what teachers consider to be the central 'problem' of concern.

In ascribing to the potential for critical pedagogies to problematise the stability and linearity of meaning making related to young people's participation in PE and sport, we also recognise that this undertaking involves more than simply rational overlay. For many young people, participation in physical (health, sport and recreation) cultures opens up the spaces for 'active desires', and gives them an opportunity to imagine and create preferred subjectivities. As a highly valued cultural practice, the deeds of sporting stars are often referenced in highlighting and celebrating the attributes of preferred citizenship. However, behind this revered veneer, participation in sport has been the subject of considerable critique for the uncritical promotion of identity frameworks that can be intensely problematic - aggressive, exclusionary, entitled and oppressive (HICKEY, 2010). Of interest to us here are the sorts of assumptions that are embedded in the ways PE is understood as a curriculum practice in schools, and the ways participation might be re-orientated to project more inclusive forms of citizenship. This endeavour is at the heart of the critical project and relies on both individual and collective strategies to support its manifestation as a verb, or stated simply, its *action* in curriculum practice.

While far from experts in a grammatical sense, we understand verbs as employed to describe 'action' in different ways. Auxiliary (or helping) verbs are used to help explain more about the tense, mood or voice of the verb. For example, if the emphasis is placed on 'critical' as an auxiliary verb in 'critical pedagogy' then the focus can be placed on the challenge of 'doing' critical (GRAY *et al.*, 2018). This call to action is amplified through notions of precarity that have entered the lexicon of contemporary critical thought, foregrounding the material and emotional components of living in a state of increasing uncertainty and insecurity (KALLEBERG, 2018; STANDING, 2011). Within the context of HPE, Kirk's (2019) acknowledges the importance of critical pedagogy has renewed urgency given teachers are 'increasingly teaching young people whose lives are shaped by precarity' (p. 107). Yet understood through the lens of transitive active or passive verbs, critical pedagogy can have its action orientation actively transferred to something or someone - 'critical pedagogue', or 'the teacher enacted critical pedagogy'

(passive). In attempting to locate criticality, understood here as both a disposition towards enacting critical pedagogy (TINNING, 2019) with an action orientation that fosters the act of ‘doing’ critical pedagogy in practice, we find ourselves troubled by the ongoing struggles that confront critical pedagogues in PE in their translational efforts.

2 CRITICAL PHYSICAL EDUCATION PEDAGOGY IN SCHOOLS

In this section we have selected a small number of recent research endeavours undertaken to actively engage critical pedagogies in school-based curriculum, around which to amplify a range of opportunities and challenges. Acknowledging the limitations of this methodology we pay homage to the practical contributions that numerous critical scholars, such as Don Hellison and Kimberley Oliver, have made to the practical translation of critical pedagogies. Much of what we cover in this section reaffirms previous observations and critiques of such pedagogic interventions. As such, our selection of projects for analysis here is largely about the contemporality of this subject matter. Whereas critical incursions in PE have had an enduring presence in teacher education, their associated translation into school-based programs has been more sporadic. Though it might have been reasonably assumed that work in the former might naturally map into the latter, the barriers to this translation are well documented. Prominent here are ‘limits to change’ that Fay (1987) broadly categorised within which he gives primacy to embedded and embodied forces. Concerned that epistemological, therapeutic, ethical and force constraints limit the critical ontology of ‘rationality and change’, Fay seeks to temper the hubris of the utopian ideal without relinquishing its emancipatory imperative. In short, Fay acknowledges that individuals are embodied, embedded, traditional, and historical persons who are encumbered within a social life that is inescapably contingent. Set in different but complimentary frameworks, numerous critical activists have similarly acknowledged the ways in which the deeply sedimented nature of PE within the milieu of schooling render it resistant to change.

In their personal interrogations of one teacher’s efforts to actively infuse critical perspectives into his HPE classes, Fitzpatrick and Russell (2015) highlight the importance of relationships in the pedagogic process. Through the lens of critical ethnography Dan’s willingness to render himself vulnerable, flawed in his desire to challenge dominant cultural and gender stereotypes, and associated power relations is made visible. Prominent in the ‘successful’ translation of this pedagogy is Dan’s personal commitment to the value propositions he seeks to critique and promote. While Dan’s students appear to enjoy his approach, they realise that he is different to other teachers and frequently adopts positions that are oppositional to wider school edicts. Common to other critical pedagogues, Dan is ultimately seen to operate in relative isolation and is forced to walk a thin line between mobilising his critical ideals and meeting the conventions and expectations of his employment contract. To be sure, being true to his critical commitments often puts Dan in tension with the dominant school culture. Dan explains, *“overall, the biggest difficulty for me is having the guts to openly resist and make change within the school environment. So often it is easier to consent and passively resist from a position of silent reproach than it is to publicly fight back”* (p.168). Despite the coherency of his critical commitments, Dan’s pedagogic isolation speaks directly to the ongoing concern that despite rich critical scholarship that advocates such approaches, the translation into practice in school is both complex and challenging.

Propelled by the principles of critical inquiry, Alfrey, O'Connor and Jeanes (2017) report on a curriculum intervention aimed at supporting Health and Physical Education (HPE) teachers to explore more student-centred pedagogies. The intervention had its roots in the critical paradigm through explicit framing of the problematics of an over-reliance on transmissive or didactic pedagogies across the discipline. Such pedagogical approaches are widely understood to install a lack of criticality and reflexivity in the pedagogic process. Driven by a policy provision for teachers to engage in critical inquiry as a form of professional learning, the 'Take Action' initiative was designed with teachers as co-creators of change as a form of participatory action research. Within the 'Take Action' framework, the researchers tracked the experiences of three teachers as they implemented their personal unit of intervention. While the interventions of the three teachers were differential in their success, there were some recurring learnings about the complexity of undertaking critical change in schools. Of note here was the grip of tradition and the ontological discomfort associated with departure from the pedagogic known and familiar. Compounding this were systemic impediments associated with a lack of time and structural and cultural support to fully engage in the processes associated with meaningful critical change. Among the other learnings to take out of this research is a broader question about the level of commitment teachers have to critical change and what sources and structures exist to foster this in ways that are practical and non-ideal. Prominent here in postulations for improved engagement with critical pedagogies is the challenge for policy to influence practice in ways that are contextual and contingent.

Gerdin *et al.* (2018) and Schenker *et al.* (2019) report on various dimensions of a transnational comparison of critical conceptualisations and enactments in school-based HPE programs. Underpinned by a critique of neoliberalism the authors proffer the potential learnings that can be generated from comparing and contrasting social justice practices in different cultural contexts. They focus their study on Norway, Sweden and New Zealand where socially-critical perspectives are made explicit in each country's contemporary HPE curricula. Among the most generative findings from the early reporting of this project is the apparent lack of uniformity in the ways in which social justice is understood and practiced across different cultural contexts. While acknowledging that the critical educational project is not built on a one-fits-all foundation, the researchers grappled to find a framework to permit a productive relational analysis, in a way that respected differences while bringing likeness to the fore. Although their contemporary curricula share common social justice commitments and language, their early analytic work highlights nuanced cultural enactments.

Further endorsing cultural distinctiveness, Walton-Fisette and colleagues (2019) give line of sight to the place of social justice in the United States. To the forefront in their analysis is the lack of an explicit social justice agenda within K-12 physical education curricula at the national and state levels or beginning teacher standards. Given the diverse social, political and cultural contexts that shape the lived experiences of learners across the US they argue that there is an escalating need for social justice education to be integrated across all aspects of PE in an informed and systematic way. While acknowledging the need for a culturally sensitive approach they implore policy makers to look at the international environment for direction on how to progress this effort. Here, they identify countries that have made social justice explicit in their curriculum and teacher standards and professional development frameworks. To this end, they take the explicit framing of social justice education within the curriculum as a start point to meaningful change. Within a praxis orientation they implore researchers to lead the

way in shaping the integration of evidence based social justice education into contemporary curriculum and policy. Identifying teachers as key policy actors they recognise that the effective translation of a coherent social justice agenda for health and physical education will require targeted support across their professional careers.

Against this backdrop we are provoked by recent questioning about what is happening in the name of critical pedagogy in PE (FITZPATRICK, 2018). Such sentiments emerge from ongoing concerns about the ineffective translational endeavour - that the critical project has reached a 'stalemate' (FERNANDEZ-BALBOA, 2017), or been locked in an 'echo-chamber' (LEAHY *et al.*, 2016). As we have argued elsewhere (HICKEY; MOONEY, 2019), part of the difficulty in tracking the impact of critical pedagogy in PE lies in its slippery and effuse nature and the complex task of 'naming' (noun) what might be classified within the 'big tent' of critical scholarship (LATHER, 1998). In an effort to move forward, we focus our line of sight on the socio-political conditions that might more productively enable and support its carriage in praxis.

3 POLICY ACTORS AND THE CRITICAL PROJECT AGENDA: AN AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

Our contemplations about moving forward with action have led us into what Carney (2009) terms the 'policyscape'. Building upon the work of Appadurai's 'ideoscapes' (1990), Carney (2009) uses this term to describe the ways in which global policy messages in education become ideologised and navigated in practice at the local level. Carney (2009) explains the 'policyscape' as a tool that can be put to work to 'explore the spread of policy ideas and pedagogical practices across different national school systems' (p. 68). We find this a useful concept for thinking through both the transnational character of the critical project agenda, and, in particular, the ways in which it has been enabled and challenged. If we accept that policies become an important vehicle through which 'educational messages travel and embed elsewhere' (CARNEY, 2009, p. 69), then *policy* becomes an obvious starting point through which to locate and mobilise mandates resonant with the critical project, a point Penney (2017) has recently argued.

Using the Australian context as an analytic reference point, long-standing policy imperatives for teachers to engage in critically-orientated practices have existed for some time. National legislation across various anti-discrimination laws prevent discrimination in areas of public life on the basis of a number of protected attributes (e.g., age, disability, race, sex, gender identity and sexual orientation), and are supported in Education through sector-specific associated standards, such as the national Disability Standards for Education (2005). While a working knowledge of these legislative requirements is currently mandated in the Australian Professional Standards for Graduate Teachers, and likely evidenced in the final Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) task for graduating teachers, commitments towards inclusive praxis remain individual and varied for teachers, mediated by the cultural practices of the school in which they teach. Arguably, a more accessible policy imperative for teachers to engage with practices resonant with the critical agenda lies within the Australian HPE curriculum. Apart from detailing content descriptors to guide pedagogies in supporting learner's progress against a predetermined achievement standard, the HPE Curriculum is overlaid with five key ideas, or propositions, that seek to 'guide what would be some values and directions for a futures-orientated

HPE curriculum' (MACDONALD, 2013, p. 99). The critical agenda is explicitly thread through the proposition of 'critical inquiry' that promotes opportunities to engage students in critical inquiry processes to analyse 'contextual factors that influence decision-making, behaviours and actions, and explore inclusiveness, power inequalities, assumptions, diversity and social justice' (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2019). We argue that for teachers, curriculum becomes a more accessible form of policy – used to teach, assess and report on student achievement. Put simply, they are required to engage with it explicitly to at least some extent. However, given the propositions exist as only guiding philosophic and value-orientated underpinnings expected to permeate HPE curriculum practice (ALFREY *et al.* 2017), and not something that teachers are required to report against, they risk being ignored.

In returning to our focus on 'action', Ball (1993, p. 12) explains that policies 'are textual interventions into practice', with teachers positioned as policy actors responsible for their enactment. Yet as Ball (1993) explains, teachers as 'writerly' readers of text are somewhat constrained in these processes of enactment given their 'readings and reactions are not constructed in circumstances of their own making' (p. 12). Ball recognises that policies can become intensely problematic at the coalface, noting that 'we cannot predict or assume how [policies] will be acted on, what their immediate effect will be, what room for manoeuvre actors will find for themselves' (p. 12). Put simply, Ball (1993) argues that action 'is not determined by policy' (p. 12). More recently, Penney (2017) has discussed that while the 'policy playing field' (p. 572) is far from an even one, moving beyond a 'sense of detachment' in policy developments to recognising a more active role as a 'player' is needed. In this sense, understanding teachers as policy actors directs attention to policy enactment as 'discursive processes that are complexly configured, contextually mediated and institutionally rendered' (BALL *et al.*, 2012, p. 3).

Policy work involves policy actors in the ongoing production, negotiation, interpretation, adaptation and re-representation of curriculum. Through iterative engagement with formal curriculum documents, accompanying guidance materials, texts, resources, programs of work, lesson plans and assessment materials, they are empowered by inherently unfinished nature of curriculum (PENNEY, 2013). Of course, like any call to action, policy actors are not all equal and their responses may be varied (BALL *et al.*, 2012). Using a continuum metaphor Ball *et al.* (2012) explain that at one end you have 'narrators' who selectively filter 'crucial' aspects of policy interpretation – they explain policy to their colleagues, 'what can be done and what cannot. There is often a fine balance between making policy palatable and making it happen' (BALL *et al.*, 2012, p. 50). At the other end of the continuum are policy 'receivers' – characterised often as junior colleagues who are often looking for guidance and direction and somewhat passively 'exhibit policy dependency and high levels of compliance' (BALL *et al.*, 2012, p. 63). While we would like to assume that teachers have a degree of agency in taking up positions along the continuum, we know the call to action is problematic, and context specific (Ball *et al.* 2012). Amidst the on-going intensification of teacher's work, 'a lot of the time teachers do not "do policy" – policy "does them" (BALL *et al.*, 2012, p. 616).

Acknowledging this point, but also recognising that teachers can be key 'potential agents for change' (KIRK, 2019a, p. 111), we return to the notion of criticality. In describing the rising prevalence of precarity, Kirk (2019b) proffers the increasing need for pedagogies that can mediate the heightened levels of anxiety, alienation and frustration that students, and their teachers, are likely to bring with them to physical education classes. In the absence

of a pedagogic tool kit that is underpinned by an awareness of the affective and emotional components of living in a state of insecurity, uncertainty and complexity, teachers are unlikely to connect with learners in ways that are meaningful and, ultimately, educational. Through a deepening consciousness of the world, produced through reflection and action (FREIRE, 1970), teachers are more likely to realise the practical utility of a critical disposition. While Tinning (1991) has acknowledged that teachers may be more or less receptive towards forming critical dispositions, he continues to argue for the pursuit of criticality in PE. Elsewhere we have argued that criticality might be fostered through targeted pedagogic interventions in PETE that invite students to deepen their consciousness of inequitable practices. But, as we contemplated, the way the invitation to criticality is issued becomes central to how these invitations are taken up by students (HICKEY; MOONEY, 2019). We acknowledge that disruptive work can be challenging and that students do not always appreciate the intensity and scrutiny of the critical turn (KENWAY; BULLEN, 2002), but policy mandates within the Australian education context provide strong imperatives for developing criticality in our teachers. The challenge, as we see it, is to facilitate ways in which policy can be productively engaged, and policy actor positions enabled.

4 IMPLICATIONS

In revisiting the ongoing struggles that confront PE teachers in their carriage of the critical project, our focus in this paper has largely been on critical pedagogy, and criticality, as verbs, 'doing' words. Our efforts to move beyond rehearsed arguments of what it is and what it is not in practice (the what, or noun) are largely propelled by policy imperatives in the Australian context that mandate action beyond an 'optional extra' for HPE teachers. Yet, numerous research projects illustrate that despite these imperatives, critical pedagogies are taken up differentially and sometimes problematically, if at all, in the day-to-day milieu of school PE (GERDIN *et al.*, 2018). To that end, we have sought to think through the 'how', the ways in which teachers can and do take up this call to action, and to consider ways in which a more systematic and sustained approach to critical pedagogy might be enabled.

In his revisioning of a new critical pedagogy for 'turbulent times', Kirk (2019) argues that the focus should be on pedagogy as 'the interdependent and interacting components of teaching, learning, curriculum and assessment' (p. 112-113). As Alfrey and colleagues (2017) have pointed out, institutional enablers are required to support curriculum change in any sustained way. Specifically, they highlight that teachers require time to grapple with new ideas, resources to support the trialling of these ideas and investments by school leaders and collaborators. This is difficult work, as so having partners, critical friends and champions of change become central to advancing the critical educational project in ways that are practical and sustainable (FITZPATRICK, 2018). Intrigued by the overlay of a policy imperative, we consider that improved engagement with critical pedagogies can be enabled through a policy agenda, but for policy to influence practice in ways that are contextual and contingent *policy actors* are key.

After Ball *et al.* (2011) we acknowledge that not all policies are the same and that different '*kinds of policy, position and produce teachers as different kinds of policy subjects*' (p. 612). As Ball *et al.* (2011) discuss, policies can allow for a 'primarily passive policy subject, a

“technical professional” (p. 612) whose practice is largely predetermined by the requirements of the imperative policy text with relatively little reflexive judgement required during enactment. They think of these as ‘readerly policies [where] teachers are put under pressure to submit to the discipline of necessity... They do not locate the reader as a site of the production of meaning, but only as the receiver of a fixed, predetermined, reading’ (BALL *et al.*, 2011, p. 612). Yet in another reading, *writerly* policies ‘can enable an active policy subject, a more ‘authentic;’ professional who is required to bring judgement, originality and passion... they are productions rather than products’ (BALL *et al.*, 2011, p. 615), albeit mediated by the institutional contexts in which they do policy work. The challenge is in more fully understanding the role that criticality might play in allowing for active policy subjects, or actors. Through a stronger engagement with policy during initial teacher education courses and continuing professional development, certain policy actor positions can be enabled and developed. This ‘call to action’ can be further mobilised when infused with attempts to enable criticality – in short, policy can provide the pedagogic invitations to develop critical dispositions in ways that connect with practice in meaningful ways. Criticality, we argue, may offer some form of ‘policy magic’ (PENNEY, 2017) as a means through which teachers, as policy actors, define for themselves and enact responses to ‘the policy problems that really matter in physical education’ (Penney, 2017, p. 582). In this light policy driven action presents as a, albeit messy, complex and contradictory, process through which teachers might engage a social justice agenda in PE.

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