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This is the published version of a paper published in *Educational Philosophy and Theory*.

Citation for the original published paper (version of record):

Larsson, H. (2018)

Physical education - educating bodies after postmodernism?

*Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 50(14): 1435-1436

<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1461378>

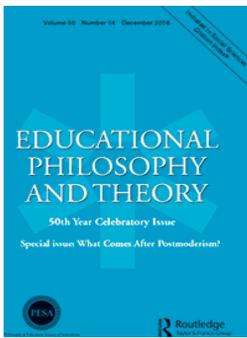
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## Physical education—educating bodies *after* postmodernism?

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To cite this article: Håkan Larsson (2018) Physical education—educating bodies *after* postmodernism?, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 50:14, 1435-1436, DOI: [10.1080/00131857.2018.1461378](https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1461378)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00131857.2018.1461378>



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Published online: 25 Nov 2018.



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## Physical education—educating bodies *after* postmodernism?

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What can physical education (PE) in schools become after postmodernism? By the way, what was it about *within* postmodernism, which is taken to have been an ‘age dominated by playfulness, hybridity, relativism, and the fragmentary self’ (invitation to Collective Writing Experiment)? Alluding to Hekman (2009) and Latour (1993), I am not sure that PE ever was postmodern, maybe not even modern. In any case, the purpose of PE has been debated for decades. Perhaps, this confusion around PE mirrors precisely the ambiguity that permeates contemporary societies concerning bodies and embodiment.

Indeed, there are many good expressions of new, playful and hybrid activities within movement culture, which contribute to queer, subvert and transgress what is considered to be ‘normal’. However, these postmodern pronouncements rarely show up in PE, which is more often taken to be about controlling and disciplining bodies, making them more effective (Evans, Davies, & Wright, 2004). This is apparent, for instance, regarding gender. While gender is played with in many contexts, also in competitive sports, a range of studies in PE indicate how students revert back to stereotypical gender(ed) positions (Lisahunter, 2016).

That playfulness, hybridity, relativism and fragmentary selves are expressed also in competitive sports is indicated by athletes like Dutee Chand, the Indian sprinter. In connection with the 2014 Commonwealth Games, Chand was ‘accused’ of hyperandrogenism—even though there was no suspicion of doping, which made her ineligible to compete as a female athlete. Later, though, and much due to a massive critique against the international athletics establishment, Chand was allowed to compete in the 2016 Rio Olympics.

What educational insights can these brief remarks about bodies and embodiment offer PE? My suggestion is that we take Chand’s example as a guiding principle for how we can bodily educate young people. In Markula’s (2008) terms the case of Chand could be a marvellous example of what bodies ‘can do to create social change’ (p. 403). Focusing what bodies can do, and not getting caught in rational deliberation about what bodies ‘are’ and how they are to be categorised, disciplined and normalised—optimised, is in fact precisely what I take to be the idea of *performative pedagogy*: Performative pedagogy is about how bodies have unique abilities of changing limiting molar identities. We should celebrate moving bodies, not limiting the practice to theoretical constructions aimed at critical awareness. Critique may well be an important first step towards change, but critique alone will not evoke change. Thus, critical physical educationalists must actively engage with moving bodies (cf. Markula, 2008, p. 399).

In contemporary PE practice, the quest for rationality is so strong that movement seem soon to be a thing of the past in the teaching of the subject, in favour of ‘health knowledge’. Embracing the idea of performative pedagogies as a way to evoke social change is also, I argue, embracing *movement*. Maybe this shifting of focus from ‘talking bodies’ to ‘moving bodies’ signify what comes after postmodernism?

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## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

## Notes on contributor

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