

Touchless classes and absent bodies: teaching physical education in times of Covid-19

Valeria Varea & Gustavo González-Calvo

To cite this article: Valeria Varea & Gustavo González-Calvo (2021) Touchless classes and absent bodies: teaching physical education in times of Covid-19, *Sport, Education and Society*, 26:8, 831-845, DOI: [10.1080/13573322.2020.1791814](https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2020.1791814)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2020.1791814>



© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 09 Jul 2020.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 19987



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)



Citing articles: 25 View citing articles [↗](#)

Touchless classes and absent bodies: teaching physical education in times of Covid-19

Valeria Varea ^a and Gustavo González-Calvo ^b

^aSchool of Health Sciences, Örebro University, Örebro, Sweden; ^bDepartamento de Didáctica de la Expresión Musical, Plástica y Corporal, Universidad de Valladolid, Valladolid, Spain

ABSTRACT

Bodies have been claimed to be an ‘absent presence’ and touch ‘risky business’ in physical education (PE). We have now witnessed how these claims are intensified in pandemic times of Covid-19, particularly in countries that have adopted extreme lockdown measures. This paper explores how PE practices have become ‘touchless’ and bodies absent using the theoretical concepts of risk and assemblage. The paper focusses on a group of pre-service PE teachers who were keen on undertaking their PE practicum experience and who were forced to switch to online mode. Data were collected through participant-produced drawings and comments on the drawings. Results suggest that the pre-service teachers are experiencing a mix of emotions during this time, miss the physical contact with students and believe the subject of PE is losing its identity as a consequence of the current situation. The conclusions of this study reveal a shift in the way that bodies are being constituted as assemblages now, and the possibility that pre-service teachers are missing out on an important aspect of their practicum experiences because of the lack of direct contact with students. We also wonder if pre-service teacher education programmes should put more emphasis on better preparing the students to teach online, and what will be the long-term consequences in the teaching of PE because of the current Covid-19 pandemic situation.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 30 May 2020

Accepted 1 July 2020

KEYWORDS

Covid-19; physical education; lockdown; risk; assemblage; touch; bodies

Introduction

Bodies have been claimed to be an ‘absent presence’ (Shilling, 1993) and touch ‘risky business’ (Jones, 2004; Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2017), particularly in physical education (PE) and sport contexts (Fletcher, 2013; Miller et al., 2007; Öhman, 2017). However, we have now seen how bodies have become an absent absence, and touch forbidden and unthinkable in current pandemic times of Covid-19. Bodies now exist mainly through screens and at homes in countries which have adopted extreme lockdown regimes, and now the risk of having physical contact or proximity with students is associated with the transmission of the highly infectious virus Covid-19. In this sense, we have witnessed many jobs and tasks switching to online modes, including the delivery of PE. This is particularly significant for activities that have a more ‘hands-on’ approach (such as PE), and could be problematic for teachers, especially pre-service teachers who were keen to undergo their (face-to-face) practicum¹ at schools. This means that bodies are still missing (Lambert, 2020), even more than before.

CONTACT Valeria Varea  valeria.varea@oru.se

© 2020 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group
This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way.

The aim of this paper is to explore how pre-service teachers are experiencing their online PE practicum as a consequence of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Specifically, we delve into how their PE practices have become 'touchless' and their (and students') bodies, absent. This paper is the first of its kind in investigating how the Covid-19 pandemic has influenced ways of teaching PE, particularly in relation to (absent) bodies and (lack of) touch.

Rethinking risk and the shift of assemblage in pandemic times

Risk and uncertainty have been characteristics of our society for more than two decades (Rose, 1999). Beck (1992) first described 'risk society' as an inescapable structural condition of advanced industrialisation involving hidden politics, ethics and morality. Risk and blame have largely been implemented in Western contexts over the decades (Bauman, 2000; Douglas, 1994; Lash et al., 1996) to discipline people by manipulating and eradicating ambivalence (Bauman, 1991), so that life's eventualities are subjected to human control in the attempt to avoid all risk.

The risk among PE teachers and sport coaches to be falsely accused of sexual harassment or molestation has been explored lately in the literature (e.g. Fletcher, 2013; Jones, 2004; Owen & Gillentine, 2011; Piper et al., 2013). While most of this literature has been conducted from the teachers' and coaches' perspective, particularly regarding the risk that involves touching children, Caldeborg et al. (2019) and Caldeborg and Öhman (2019) have been investigating physical contact from the students' point of view. In order for children to develop to their fullest potential, physical contact is sometimes required in PE and thus can be regarded as a basic human right (Öhman & Quennerstedt, 2017).

Giddens (1991) claimed that concerns associated with risk are not necessarily related to life-threatening events but are rather more concerned with the use of surveillance and monitoring systems to measure risk. However, we have witnessed how the current concern related to risk in times of Covid-19 has shifted to a life-threatening fear. Covid-19 creates a fear of others being contagious and, therefore, limits freedom in people's everyday life, provoking panic and often being classified as 'the creation of a pandemic' (Agamben, 2020). The unknown, such is this virus, triggers fear and panic (Berardi, 2020). A pandemic context brings uncertainty, as it disrupts people's routines and the future is uncertain and frightening.

Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of 'assemblage' is becoming more popular in the field of PE and Sport Studies. For example, Landi (2018) used this concept to reflect on his affective experiences as a queer male physical educator. He also considered research methods as an assemblage to investigate the affects of PE on queer men (Landi, 2019). Hordvik et al. (2019) used assemblage to study how pre-service teachers negotiate their Sport Education PE teacher education learning experience during practicum. Furthermore, Rich (2010) employed Haggerty and Ericson's (2000) concept of 'surveillant assemblage', developed from Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of assemblage, to examine how surveillant practices in schools are part of an assemblage constituted by a variety of agencies, institutions, bodies and socio-technological developments. In previous research (see González-Calvo et al., 2019), we have also used Deleuze and Guattari's (1987) concept of 'assemblage' to study how pre-service PE teachers' bodies can be considered as the action of multiple components coming together (DeLanda, 2016) through relationships with other bodies, things and ideas.

Deleuze and Guattari (1987) describe the body as assemblage, that is, as 'a physiological and social institution, a relationship, an intense capacity that is sensed ... a site where forces engage with each other' (Goodchild, 1997, p. 43). In so doing, bodies are processual and unpredictable, and the connections between bodies and the world significant, as they define the capacities for action. Thus, this perspective emphasises the body as 'becoming', suggesting that all things, bodies and matter are in continuous connection (Deleuze, 1992).

The body-as-assemblage requires 'external' bodies (material, non-material, etc.) in constant interaction to assemble and re-assemble into new formations, continuously re-shaping subjectivities (Landi, 2019). A subject's 'being-assembled-together' is what is labelled as subjectification (Rose,

1996). This approach to the body places importance on the concepts and constructs with which the body engages, including discourses, affects, ideals, norms, practices, institutions, other bodies and objects (Coffey, 2015).

In the situation of extreme lockdown that Spain is currently going through, the constitution of bodies as assemblages may be difficult, as they do not have many chances of interactions with external things and bodies. There is now a lack of face-to-face encounters between bodies, forces and practices which may influence how bodies affect and are affected. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) claimed that 'we know nothing about a body until we know what it can do, in other words, what its affects are, how they can or cannot enter into composition with other affects, with the affects of another body' (p. 257). Consequently, if bodies in Spain are not currently entering much into direct composition with other things, affecting other bodies and being affected, there is a risk that pre-service teachers who were supposed to be at schools doing their practicum are missing out on learning how their bodies are becoming and how they could be affecting other (specially students') bodies.

Covid-19 and lockdown in Spain

This paper was inspired by the two different (and mainly opposite) situations the two authors of this paper are living through in these Covid-19 pandemic times. Valeria lives in Sweden, where restrictions on everyday life have been minimal in relation to Covid-19. Sweden is now known worldwide for its different approach in dealing with Covid-19, but has not been exempted from critique and the number of cases and deaths remains high compared to other countries. Despite this, everyday life in Sweden remains almost unchanged, and while there are some recommendations in place, not many lockdown regimes have been imposed. On the other hand, Gustavo lives in Spain, where the government decided to implement an extreme lockdown, restricting the freedom of people's routines and closing schools and universities. Because of this, pre-service PE teachers who were undertaking their practicum period have been affected by the lack of opportunities to go to schools and teach PE.

As of 18 May 2020, Spain has had a total of 231,606 confirmed Covid-19 cases, with 27,709 deaths and 150,376 recovered (Ministerio de Sanidad, 2020). On 14 March 2020, the Spanish government decided to declare a state of emergency in the country and go into lockdown, initially for 15 days. The lockdown was then extended until 18 May 2020, and it is anticipated that it will be further extended for at least one more month. This decision involved the cessation of all face-to-face educational activities from all educational levels, and 13 March 2020 was the last day of school and university classes.

During lockdown, people have limited permission to be in public spaces. Going to medical centres, workplaces, supermarkets, pharmacies and places of care for the vulnerable, disabled and elderly are the only exceptions. All types of outdoor physical activity, going to parks and activities for children were also suspended. This is significant in a country such as Spain, given that results from a previous study suggest that Spain is a country with a high-proximity culture and where pre-service PE teachers consider physical contact with students normal and expected (Varea et al., 2018). This brings significant consequences in current times of pandemic lockdown, particularly for a group of pre-service PE teachers who were keen on having their face-to-face PE teaching experience at schools and now have to contend with the experience of teaching PE online.

Methods

Participants for this study were a group of 12 pre-service PE teachers from Spain (four women and eight men) who were undertaking their practicum in PE when the Covid-19 lockdown was imposed in Spain. Participants were in the last year of their teaching degree programme (fourth year) and were undertaking their second practicum. This final practicum was supposed to last for

12 weeks, with the pre-service teachers required to teach face-to-face PE classes in schools. Since all face-to-face classes have been suspended in Spain since 13 March 2020 in all educational levels and institutions, all educational actors had to switch their classes to online mode. As a consequence, these pre-service teachers also had to undertake their PE practicum online. They had online contact with both the university tutor and the teachers and students from schools. They were requested to prepare videos, tutorials, physical activities and other activities, so that school students could work on them from their homes.

Participant-produced drawings and semi-structured interviews were used for data collection for the overall project. We used participant-produced drawings in this study because they are a way to tap quickly into the emotional lives of participants (Vince, 1995; Vince & Broussine, 1996). Graphical representations, such as drawings, have the capacity to surface unspoken thoughts and feelings. 'Drawings offer a different kind of glimpse into human sense-making than written or spoken texts do, because they can express that which is not easily put into words: the ineffable, the elusive, the not-yet-thought-through, the subconscious' (Weber & Mitchell, 1995, p. 34). A pre-text (such as drawings) is a stimulus that can be used to motivate, set a scene and build emotion (O'Neill, 1995).

The use of drawings as a catalyst for the interviews allowed participants to frame their own experiences about Covid-19 and teaching PE. Each participant was asked to make a drawing about themselves teaching PE 'before' and 'during' Covid-19 lockdown as entry to a one-on-one semi-structured online interview. Participants were also asked to interpret and explain their drawings. Results presented in this paper are drawn only from the drawings and the explanations of the drawings. The drawings and excerpts of their descriptions included in this paper are the ones most representative of the topics being discussed.

Data analysis was guided by our specific aims and theoretical perspectives. The analysis took place in two overarching phases. In phase 1, all transcripts and notes were read through to identify key segments of data that were representative of the main emerging themes. In phase 2, the main themes were analysed in detail using the key tenets of the theoretical approach described above. For example, particular attention was given to the (lack and change of) relations that participants now create with other bodies, objects and practices. Also, segments of data that referred to embodiment and physical contact were key in the analysis process. The drawings were analysed in two different ways. First, what participants said about the drawings was coded as transcripts. Second, all drawings were organised into a comprehensive, systematic photo inventory (Prosser, 2007) and a visual content analysis (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001) was conducted. 'Variables' and 'values' mutually exclusive and exhaustive were used in the coding of the drawings (van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2001). For example, some variables used were: 'feelings', 'pose', and some of the values were: 'sad/happy', 'passive/active'.

Data were analysed by both researchers. A first round of analysis was carried out by Gustavo, then Valeria analysed the data. Afterwards, both researchers analysed the data together. This allowed us to look for similarities and differences in our analyses and to achieve trustworthiness in the process. We are also aware that our research will always be influenced by our subjectivities and positionalities. Ethical approval was obtained through the university and participants' names were replaced by pseudonyms to ensure anonymity in the reporting of results. Three main themes were constructed from the data and are presented below: (1) Emotions while teaching PE during lockdown, (2) Losing the PE identity? and (3) Missing physical contact.

Results and discussion

Emotions while teaching PE during lockdown

Participants made constant reference to their emotions during lockdown, and how their emotions while teaching PE have significantly changed from before to during Covid-19 pandemic times. One of the main changes in their emotional status is reflected in how they represented themselves

as happy and with a smile when they were teaching face-to-face PE and were in direct contact with students before lockdown, and then sad when they had to switch to online teaching. The pre-service teachers also highlighted the shortcomings of teaching PE online, and how that affected their mood and feelings (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Happy to sad teaching.

Online teaching doesn't allow me to create empathy with students, or that individualised attention that is possible in face-to-face teaching. In the second drawing I don't represent myself as happy because I don't like this type of teaching. (Rita)

In the first drawing I represent myself teaching PE before lockdown with a smile. I represent the class with joy and the privilege of living in a place without restrictions which allows us to enjoy every moment of the day with almost complete freedom ... In the second drawing I represent working until late at night, and with a facial expression of uncertainty, burden, stress and concern because of the lockdown that we are going through. (Domingo)

As demonstrated elsewhere (González-Calvo et al., 2020), emotions are present and play a significant role when pre-service PE teachers are undertaking their practicum experiences during 'normal times'. However, these emotions are intensified and changed during Covid-19 practicum, mainly because of the switch to online mode and the uncertainty about the future. Domingo (above) commented on his feelings of uncertainty and lack of freedom. Uncertainty has been claimed to be a characteristic of today's society (Beck, 1992). However, in current times, we have witnessed an increase of uncertainty, and this is particularly relevant for these pre-service PE teachers, as they are not sure about how to continue teaching PE online, whether all their students are following their classes and instructions, and how they can work on the continuity of a PE unit. Covid-19 is also limiting freedom and provoking panic in people in Spain, according to what Agamben (2020) has named as a creation of a pandemic. In this sense, it brings uncertainty as it disrupts people's routines and the future is unknown and frightening.

Another participant, Dalilo, commented on the sun as a symbol of happiness, and how the class is more productive when everyone 'shines together':

In the first drawing the sun shines in the class. All students and the teacher have direct contact, are happy and they can shine together ... We can't shine anymore in that way; we just conform with trying to do things in the best possible way. (Dalilo)

Cooperative and group activities have been traditionally employed in PE classes, and now these pre-service teachers are facing a situation in which they cannot make use of these activities. In alignment with Dalilo's comment, the pre-service teachers used different colours in their drawings to represent sadness and happiness. Some of them used a grey scale to draw the teaching of PE today, representing a sad situation, and brighter colours for the drawings of teaching PE in the past (Figures 2 and 3).

The second drawing represents the way of teaching PE during lockdown ... It's a sad and 'grey' situation, that's why I didn't use as many colours as in the first drawing. (Joaquin)

The first image represents PE as I believe it should be: a fun and cooperative subject where there is direct contact with students, full of colours, with dreams and a happy teacher doing her job ... The second image is grey, as there is a 'cold' and distant teaching with no direct contact between teacher and students, or among students themselves. (Marina)

I can't teach games or group activities as everyone is at their homes. This idea of PE with cooperation and group activities is essential for the teaching of PE. I'm angry now with all this situation because we have lost the most important feature of our subject. (Sarah)

Participants demonstrated a mix of emotions while needing to switch to online practices. Predominant feelings were sadness and anger. New teachers' emotions are often characterised by enthusiasm and a high level of motivation (Helms-Lorenz et al., 2012; Orland-Barak & Maskit, 2011). However, these emotions are momentarily hidden by sadness because of the current lockdown context in Spain. It is common for people to experience nostalgia – that is, a sentimental longing for a period in the past – and in current times of Covid-19 this wishful affection for the past and a return to normal lives and previous routines, where risk is kept to a minimum, is intensified. But nostalgia is not merely an expression of longing, it is also a result of a new understanding of time and space (Boym, 2007). We are currently witnessing how Covid-19 is changing understandings of time



Figure 2. Use of colours to represent emotions. Translation **Figure 2:** Yesterday – social interaction, direct contact, affective relationships.

and space. For example, people are getting more and more used to technology and working from their homes, which results in a change of their working space. Also, the understanding of time seems to be changing for many too, as they are now working more flexible hours, and some have the impression that ‘all days are the same’.

In the last comment (above), Sarah made reference to the identity of PE, and how games and group activities are important to the delivery of PE. In this way, we now move to the second category of the results, which is related to how Covid-19 has threatened the identity of PE.

Losing the PE identity?

In the second drawing I represent that wearing sporty clothes is not important anymore, and that was one of the identity characteristics of our subject. (Rita)



Figure 3. Use of colours to represent emotions. Translation [Figure 3](#): Today – interaction through screens.

In the drawing below, I have drawn myself with indoor shoes as there is not even the need for me to wear sporty clothes now. We just need an internet connection, a computer and a chair. Not even movement is required now. (Santiago)

While there has been an enormous amount of literature investigating the identity of the field of PE (e.g. Renson, 1989; Sage, 1984), there seems to be an agreement that sporty attire and movement are key characteristics of PE. As demonstrated elsewhere (Varea et al., 2019), sport attire is significant in the construction of pre-service PE teachers' professional subjectivities in Spain. Now, these participants are confronted with the fact that they do not need to wear their sport attire on a regular basis. They are experiencing a disruption in their subjectivities as future PE teachers, and a threat to the PE identity. Together with the wearing of a specific (sporty) attire, participants believed that movement is another key characteristic of the identity of the field of PE, and that this is also threatened by the current lockdown situation ([Figure 4](#)):

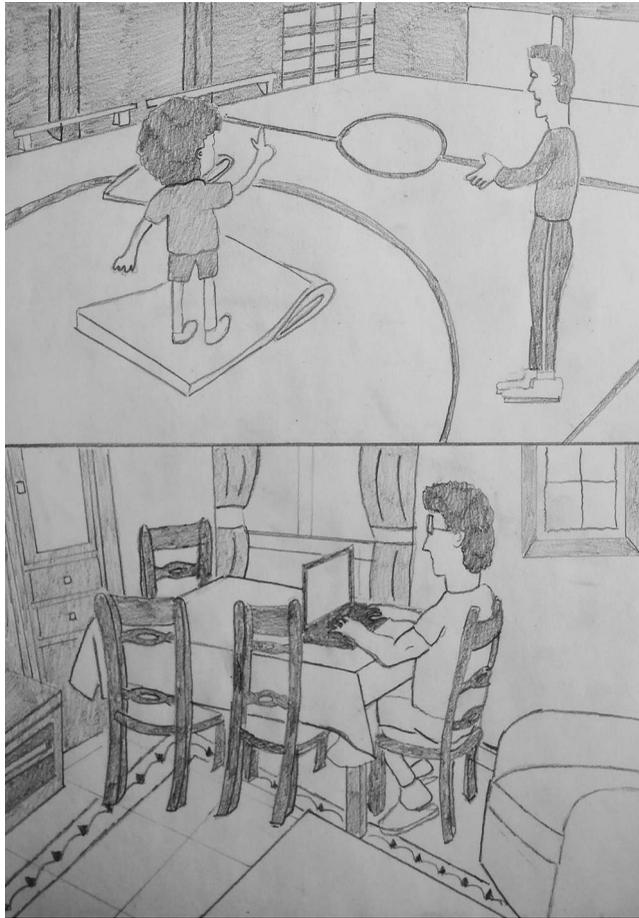


Figure 4. Sport attire and movement.

PE has lost one of the reasons to exist: movement. (Dalilo)

During these pandemic weeks, I've prepared some simple motor skill exercises for the students so they can try them at home (balances, jumps, throws). I can't think of much more for them to do, just these small silly things that I don't even think are useful for learning, or for being physically active and healthy. Maybe they are useful to distract and entertain you a bit ... but PE is more than that. (Joaquin)

Online teaching requires much more time, being permanently connected and, paradoxically, much less movement, which is the reason for PE to exist. (Juan)

All this generates a lot of uncertainty. Face-to-face PE seemed to be something real and a true profession. Now, online, everything feels fictitious. I hope all this situation goes back to normal as soon as possible and that we can teach PE face-to-face. (Carola)

These extracts indicate participants are currently unable to assemble their bodies with sporty attire and movement, which they considered to be essential for the identity of the field, and as a consequence, for their professional subjectivities as future PE teachers. Their bodies are not being affected by the sport gear that they usually wear or by the need for movement while teaching. In this sense, the participants considered to be the essence of PE everything related to movement and what allows movement (i.e. sport gear), and now they are being challenged regarding the purpose of the subject when movement is not possible in a face-to-face manner and restricted in space.

While the task for these pre-service teachers was to represent themselves teaching PE *before* and *during* Covid-19 times, one of the participants, Marina, went further and included a possible representation of herself teaching PE *after* Covid-19 (Figure 5):

In the drawing above, Marina represented both the teacher and the students wearing gloves and surgical masks during a class, and a significant personal space between individuals, more than what is 'normal' in Spain. This is worthy of highlighting because, as mentioned earlier, Spain is a country characterised by a high-proximity culture, and we are now seeing some of the first indications that the current changes in this culture may continue even after face-to-face classes resume (i.e. social distancing and personal protective equipment are likely be used for some time into the future). In this sense, Covid-19 may change behavioural attitudes and cultural characteristics of a country. Participants also made constant reference to how much they missed the physical and direct contact with students, which is further developed in the following section.

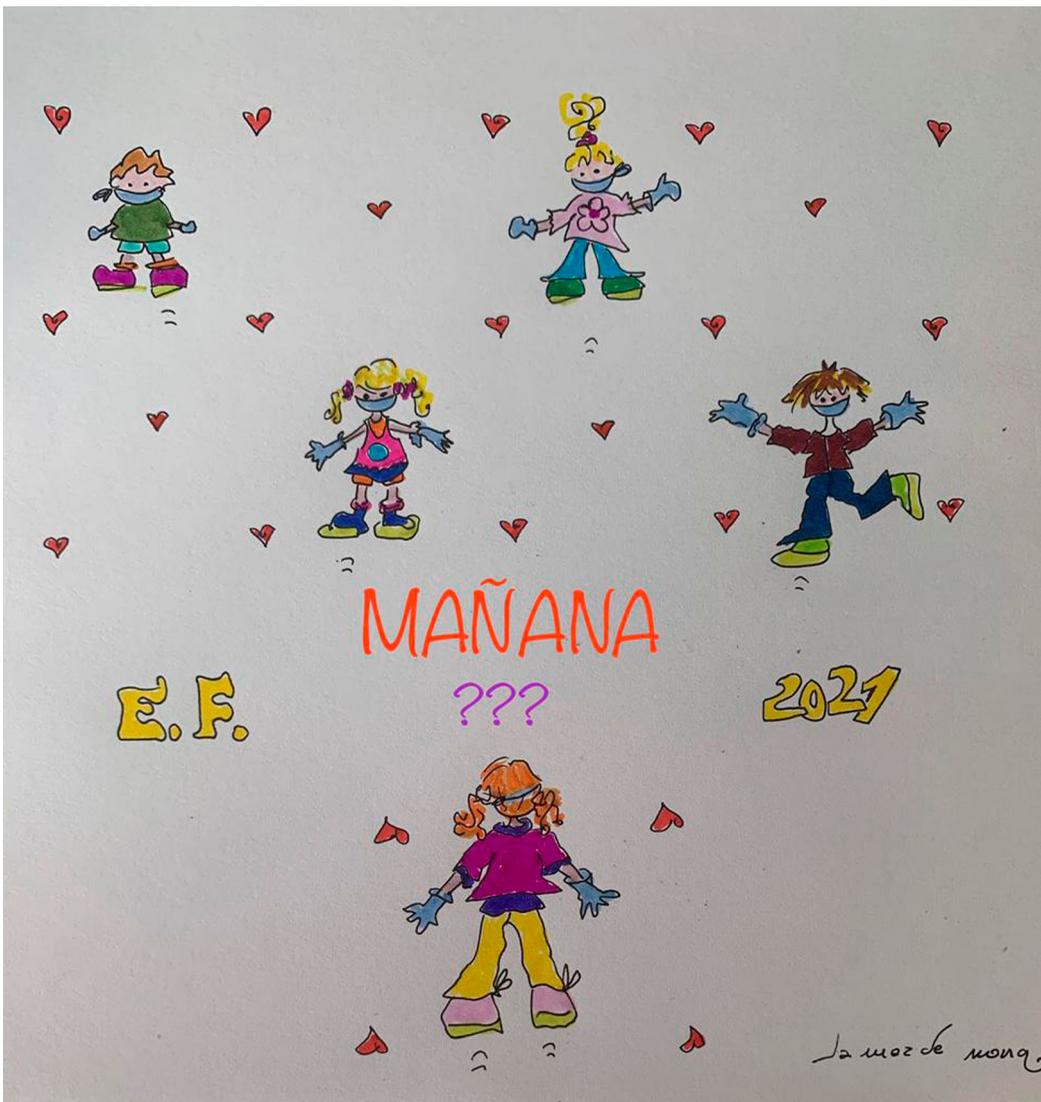


Figure 5. Teaching after Covid-19. Translation Figure 5: Tomorrow – PE 2021

Missing physical contact

The pre-service teachers missed having contact with students. They commented on this on several occasions (Figure 6):

The activities with students are now individual and without contact or communication among students. That is a more passive way of teaching and with a lot of bodily limitations for movement, as we require more contact and space. (Gastón)

The only thing that keeps us in touch now is an invisible net, which I have represented with the clouds connected to my computer. (Domingo)

In the first drawing I represented myself teaching at the gymnasium before Covid. It's a big space in which we all keep physical and visual contact ... It's a personalised and direct job, in which the smile and non-verbal gestures are as important (or more so) than words. (Santiago)

While there has been a decrease in touch in education contexts over the last few years, particularly in Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries (Owen & Gillentine, 2011; Öhman & Grundberg Sandell, 2015; Piper, 2014), physical contact between teachers and students is still normal and expected in Spain (Varea et al., 2018). As stated earlier, this country also has a high-proximity culture with less

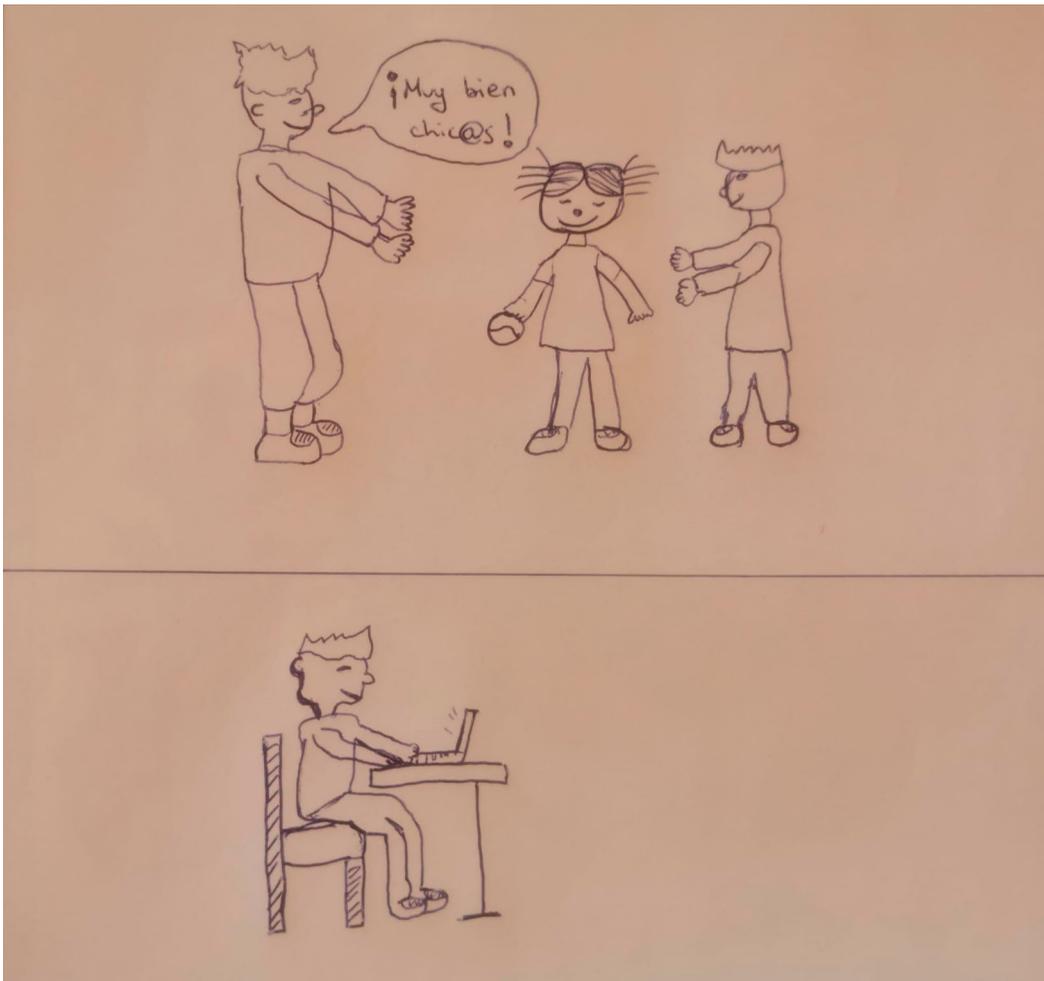


Figure 6. Lack of touch. Translation Figure 6: Very good, children!

personal space among people than in other countries. Consequently, now that these participants are forbidden to have contact with students and they have switched to fully online teaching, it has affected their approach to teaching. Furthermore, the 'risk' regarding touch is shifting now to a risk associated with a different form of touch (or no touch at all).

The left image represents closeness, visual contact and face-to-face and collective teaching with all students ... In the second image I represent how I had to adapt my teaching role ... everything is too 'cold' and 'less human'. It's not the kind of PE that I like to teach. (Cesar)

In the first image I represent proximity and bodily dialogue. The way that PE should be taught, according to my point of view. That is in the way that the teacher and the students have that proximity. In the image below I represent distance, technology dependence, remoteness and passiveness. (Matias)

The contact and relations between students and the teacher was something essential before for the class. Now the contact is almost nil and the relations between the teacher and students much colder. (Carola)

In this way, it is difficult for the pre-service teachers to assemble their bodies through direct contact with other people (especially students), and with external objects and practices (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), because they now spend most of their time inside their homes and interacting with the same small group of people living with them (if any). Their bodies now have fewer opportunities to affect other bodies and to be affected in a direct and face-to-face way. While part of that interaction and assemblage is now replaced online, the participants consistently expressed discomfort with this new approach. Their bodies are still interacting with other bodies, external things, objects and relations through different technologies, and in so doing, this leads to a different form of assemblage. This assemblage reduces the risk of contracting Covid-19, and is one of the few possible ways of assemblage during lockdown. The discourses, ideals, norms with which their bodies engage are changing, constituting a new form of assemblage.

Conclusions

The purpose of this paper was to explore how pre-service teachers are experiencing their online PE practicum as a consequence of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in Spain, where extreme lockdown regimens have been imposed. Results suggest that these pre-service teachers are experiencing a mix of emotions because of the situation. Prior to Covid-19, they were keen on having their face-to-face practicum PE experiences, and they represented themselves in the drawings with a smile and teaching group activities. Now, during Covid-19, they represented their online practicum experiences with grey colours, showing themselves as sad, in front of screens and involving almost no movement.

Movement, group activities and sporty attire were also identified as key results, as participants linked these components with the identity of the field of PE. By suppressing these characteristics in current pandemic times, the pre-service teachers are questioning the purpose and identity of PE, and by default, their professional subjectivities as PE teachers. Furthermore, they also demonstrated how much they miss their physical and direct contact with students, and their concerns regarding the teaching of a 'hands on' subject, such as PE, through digital technologies. Participants' subjectivities as future PE teachers are shifting and this poses a number of risks and new pedagogical encounters which involve unpredictable relationships. Lupton's (2015) concept of 'the digital cyborg assemblage' already warned us about the contemporary theorising of the body assemblage and its configuration of human flesh and technology. Similarly, Gard and Pluim (2014) also cautioned us about the impacts of a shift to digital PE, and this is undoubtedly happening now in Spain as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic. These pre-service teachers are now assembling their bodies mainly with technological encounters, and as most new experiences, this brings fears and uncertainty.

Given the lockdown circumstances that these pre-service teachers are currently living through, it is difficult for their bodies to be constituted as assemblages in the way that they previously did, because they are lacking in interactions with other bodies, external things, objects and relations. Their interactions with others are now limited mainly to their close circle of people that they live with (if any);

therefore, their bodies are not affecting and being affected to the same extent as in 'normal' face-to-face practicum experiences. Their bodies are still interacting with other bodies, external things, objects and relations through different technologies, and in so doing, this leads to a different form of assemblage. As a consequence, we wonder if these pre-service teachers are lacking an important component of their practicum because of this absence of opportunities for face-to-face interactions with other people, external relations, practices, discourses and objects.

On the positive side, if we consider emotions as a continuum rather than something fixed and pre-established (González-Calvo et al., 2020), there is the possibility for these pre-service PE teachers to feel happy again with their practices, and even to learn from this experience regarding how they can make the best use of technology, even for such a 'hands on' subject as PE. This situation may rise some new opportunities for the field, such as the individualisation of PE and the possibility to cater more successfully for individual students. It would also be possible to give students possibilities for exploring new movement cultures on their own as part of PE. Furthermore, we wonder if physical education Teacher Education programmes need to better prepare students to successfully use digital technologies for their practices, and what are the best options for situations like this one.

Lastly, we cannot avoid worrying about the future of our discipline *after* Covid-19. As one of the participants effectively illustrated in her drawing, PE classes might now see a change in terms of the activities proposed (more individual activities instead of group ones), the personal space around each student and the (more) avoidance of physical contact.

Note

1. These undergraduate students were required to teach PE and other subjects in schools in order to complete their degree programme. This professional practice period is commonly known as 'practicum'.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Valeria Varela  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3572-4976>

Gustavo González-Calvo  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4637-0168>

References

- Agamben, G. (2020). La invención de una epidemia [The creation of an epidemic]. In P. Amadeo (Ed.), *Sopa de Wuhan* (pp. 17–19). ASPO.
- Bauman, Z. (1991). *Modernity and ambivalence*. Polity Press.
- Bauman, Z. (2000). *Liquid modernity*. Polity Press.
- Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. Sage.
- Berardi, F. (2020). Crónica de la psicodeflación [Chronicle of psychodeflation]. In P. Amadeo (Ed.), *Sopa de Wuhan* (pp. 35–54). ASPO.
- Boym, S. (2007). Nostalgia and its discontents. *The Hedgehog Review*, 9(2), 7–18.
- Caldeborg, A., Maivorsdotter, N., & Öhman, M. (2019). Touching the didactic contract – a student perspective on inter-generational touch in PE. *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(3), 256–228. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1346600>
- Caldeborg, A., & Öhman, M. (2019). Intergenerational touch in physical education in relation to heteronormativity: Female students' perspectives. *European Physical Education Review*, 1–18. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X19865556>
- Coffey, J. (2015). 'As long as I'm fit and a healthy weight, I don't feel bad': Exploring body work and health through the concept of 'affect'. *Journal of Sociology*, 51(3), 613–627. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783313518249>
- DeLanda, M. (2016). *Assemblage theory*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Deleuze, G. (1992). Ethology: Spinoza and us. In J. Crary & S. Kwinter (Eds.), *Incorporations* (pp. 625–633). Zone.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A thousand plateaus: Capitalism and schizophrenia*. Edinburgh University Press.

- Douglas, M. (1994). *Risk and blame: Essays in cultural theory*. Routledge.
- Fletcher, S. (2013). Touching practice and physical education: Deconstruction of a contemporary moral panic. *Sport, Education and Society*, 18(5), 694–709. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2013.774272>
- Gard, M., & Plum, C. (2014). *Schools and public health: Past, present, future*. Lexington Books.
- Giddens, A. (1991). *Modernity and self-identity. Self and society in the late modern age*. Stanford University Press.
- González-Calvo, G., Varea, V., & Martínez-Álvarez, L. (2019). Health and body tensions and expectations for pre-service physical education teachers in Spain. *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(2), 158–167. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2017.1331426>
- González-Calvo, G., Varea, V., & Martínez-Álvarez, L. (2020). 'I feel, therefore I am': Unpacking preservice physical education teachers' emotions. *Sport, Education and Society*, 25(5), 543–555. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2019.1620202>
- Goodchild, P. (1997). Deleuzian ethics. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 14(2), 39–50. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327697014002005>
- Haggerty, K. D., & Ericson, R. V. (2000). The surveillant assemblage. *British Journal of Sociology*, 51(4), 605–622. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00071310020015280>
- Helms-Lorenz, M., Slof, B., Vermue, C. E., & Canrinus, E. T. (2012). Beginning teachers' self-efficacy and stress and the supposed effects of induction arrangements. *Educational Studies*, 38(2), 189–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2011.598679>
- Hordvik, M., MacPhail, A., & Tore Ronglan, L. (2019). Negotiating the complexity of teaching: A rhizomatic consideration of pre-service teachers' school placement experiences. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 24(5), 447–462. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2019.1623189>
- Jones, A. (2004). Social anxiety, sex, surveillance and the 'safe' teacher. *British Journal of Sociology of Education*, 25(1), 53–66. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0142569032000155935>
- Lambert, K. (2020). Re-conceptualizing embodied pedagogies in physical education by creating pre-text vignettes to trigger pleasure 'in' movement. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 25(2), 154–173. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2019.1700496>
- Landi, D. (2018). Toward a queer inclusive physical education. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 23(1), 1–15. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17408989.2017.1341478>
- Landi, D. (2019). Queer men, affect, and physical education. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, 11(2), 168–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2018.1504230>
- Lash, S., Szerszynski, B., & Wynne, B. (Eds.). (1996). *Risk, environment and modernity*. Sage.
- Lupton, D. (2015). Donna Haraway: The digital cyborg assemblage and the new digital health technologies. In F. Collyer (Ed.), *The Palgrave handbook of social theory in health, illness and medicine* (pp. 567–581). Palgrave Macmillan.
- Miller, M. J., Franken, N., & Kiefer, K. (2007). Exploring touch communication between coaches and athletes. *Indo-Pacific Journal of Phenomenology*, 7(2), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.1080/20797222.2007.11433953>
- Ministerio de Sanidad. (2020). *Enfermedad por nuevo coronavirus, COVID-19* [Disease for new coronavirus]. Retrieved May 18, 2020, from <https://www.mscbs.gob.es/en/profesionales/saludPublica/ccayes/alertasActual/nCov-China/situacionActual.htm>
- Öhman, M. (2017). Losing touch – teachers' self-regulation in physical education. *European Physical Education Review*, 23(3), 297–310. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X15622159>
- Öhman, M., & Grundberg Sandell, C. (2015). The pedagogical consequences of 'no touching' in physical education: The case of Sweden. In H. Piper (Ed.), *Touch in sports coaching and physical education: Fear, risk and moral panic* (pp. 70–84). Routledge.
- Öhman, M., & Quennerstedt, A. (2017). Questioning the no-touch discourse in physical education from a children's right perspective. *Sport, Education and Society*, 22(3), 305–320. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2015.1030384>
- O'Neill, C. (1995). *Drama worlds: A framework for process drama*. Heinemann.
- Orland-Barak, L., & Maskit, D. (2011). Novices 'in story': What first-year teachers' narratives reveal about the shady corners of teaching. *Teachers and Teaching*, 17(4), 435–450. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2011.580520>
- Owen, P. M., & Gillentine, J. (2011). Please touch the children: Appropriate touch in the primary classroom. *Early Child Development and Care*, 181(6), 857–868. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03004430.2010.497207>
- Piper, H. (2014). Touch, fear and child protection: Immoral panic and immoral crusade. *Power and Education*, 6(3), 229–240. <https://doi.org/10.2304/power.2014.6.3.229>
- Piper, H., Garratt, D., & Taylor, B. (2013). Child abuse, child protection and defensive 'touch' in PE teaching and sports coaching. *Sport, Education and Society*, 18(5), 583–598. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13573322.2012.735653>
- Prosser, J. (2007). Visual methods and the visual culture of schools. *Visual Studies*, 22(1), 13–30. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14725860601167143>
- Renson, R. (1989). From physical education to Kinanthropology: A quest for academic and professional identity. *Quest*, 41(3), 235–256. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1989.10483973>
- Rich, E. (2010). Obesity assemblages and surveillance in schools. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 23(7), 803–821. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.529474>
- Rose, N. (1996). *Inventing our selves: Psychology, power and personhood*. Cambridge University Press.

- Rose, N. (1999). *Governing the soul. The shaping of the private self*. Free Association Books.
- Sage, G. H. (1984). The quest for identity in college physical education. *Quest*, 36(2), 115–121. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00336297.1984.10483806>
- Shilling, C. (1993). *The body and social theory*. Sage.
- van Leeuwen, T., & Jewitt, C. (2001). *Handbook of visual analysis*. Sage.
- Varea, V., González-Calvo, G., & Hortigüela Alcalá, D. (2019). The influence of consumerism on Spanish physical education teachers. *European Physical Education Review*, 25(4), 949–963. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1356336X18789196>
- Varea, V., González-Calvo, G., & Martínez-Álvarez, L. (2018). Exploring touch in physical education practicum in a touchy Latin culture. *Societies*, 8(3), 1–13. <https://doi.org/10.3390/soc8030054>
- Vince, R. (1995). Working with emotions in the change process: Using drawings for team diagnosis and development. *Organisations & People*, 2(1), 11–17.
- Vince, R., & Broussine, M. (1996). Paradox, defense and attachment: Accessing and working with emotions and relations underlying organizational change. *Organizational Studies*, 17(1), 1–23. <https://doi.org/10.1177/017084069601700101>
- Weber, S., & Mitchell, C. (1995). *That's funny, you don't look like a teacher: Interrogating images and identity in popular culture*. Falmer Press.