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Journal of Curriculum Studies

ISSN: 0022-0272 (Print) 1366-5839 (Online) Journal homepage: http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/tcus20

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To cite this article: Nis Langer Primdahl, Alan Reid & Venka Simovska (2018): Shades of criticality in health and wellbeing education, Journal of Curriculum Studies, DOI: 10.1080/00220272.2018.1513568

To link to this article: https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1513568

Published online: 09 Sep 2018.

JOURNAL OF CURRICULUM STUDIES
https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2018.1513568

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Shades of criticality in health and wellbeing education

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ABSTRACT

Perspectives and approaches to health and wellbeing education vary considerably over time and space even as certain contextual and critical features may be maintained. Through an analysis of a range of studies published in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, we illustrate what unites as much as divides various positions taken by their authors through a focus on which assumptions they proceed from, those they may seek to problematise, and which they try to rework through their scholarship. Our analysis centres on two key questions: (a) the critical question of health education, and (b) the question of critical health education. To advance our analysis, we draw on insights from critical literature review techniques and the need to problematise research topics and assumptions that frame and guide their selection and investigation. Key outcomes include six thematic categories and the key parameters for identifying various degrees of light and shade to the criticality within these studies, including their thresholds. We conclude with a reflection on the significance of determining the object of critique during curriculum studies, and the continuing need to inquire into, rather than bypass, what counts as critical in health and wellbeing education.

KEYWORDS

Health education; wellbeing; schools; curriculum; critical

Introduction

The health and wellbeing of populations and their particular subgroups are both recurring and highly contentious themes in debates about public policy (De Leeuw, Clavier, & Benton, 2014; Thorburn, 2018). For the *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, it includes discussing general and specific priorities and policies regarding whether educational institutions should promote particular agenda and practices related to health and wellbeing, or not (e.g. Thorburn, 2017). At the heart of such debates are familiar and core questions for curriculum inquiry (Reid, 2018), such as examining:

- which educative experiences a curriculum should foster and why?
- what should be the scope of a worthwhile curriculum and how should it be decided, organised and reworked?
- why is distinctive curricula provided to different groups of students? and
- how should curriculum be best enacted and evaluated?

The scholarly literature illustrating the 'tinder' that fuels debates on these matters in relation to health and wellbeing education is wide-ranging. It may be how those in education engage with

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relatively perennial to ephemeral topics related to healthy eating, physical activity, chronic diseases, sexual behaviours, and substance use (Marmot & Allen, 2014). Equally, 'kindling' may arrive by asking whether it is a core duty of schools to promote particular forms of mental health, mindfulness, happiness, and alternative forms of wellbeing (Leahy & Simovska, 2017). While stretching the analogy further to consider the 'firewood', debate and developments on these matters may flare up with some heat—and light, it is hoped—at various levels. Transnationally, a blaze of concerns may arise from how education, educators and educationalists are expected to respond to a wide range of health-related developments and 'epidemics' across populations in Western countries and beyond, e.g. related to obesity and other forms of malnutrition, beginning-of-life to end-of-life policy and care, the relative benefits and burdens individually and collectively of health care provision and costs, and so forth. Equally, debates at national, regional and local levels might be fuelled by asking what is (deemed) necessary, appropriate and acceptable as health and wellbeing promotion initiatives in schools (Simovska, Nordin, & Dahl, 2016). And it is here, we note, that sometimes debate rages in relation to traditions and contestations of sociocultural conditions and priorities that are expressed in education (Green & Tones, 2010), while at others, it may well be to question the experiences students might expect to bring, have or discuss in a school setting on these matters—if not what others expect those to be—including their boundaries, participatory modes or challenges to such student experience (Grieber et al., 2017).

A key theme of this essay is that to be able to take a critical perspective in what may well be an 'enflamed' situation requires the unpacking of various assumptions that are built into mainstream curricula and deliberations thereon in relation to health-related matters. By extension, it will be important and critical to examine the ways in which curriculum can, should and is expected to function within a system that offers or focuses on regulation, socialisation and emancipation in relation to topics of health and wellbeing, coupled with the roles of both an evidence base *and* a values base informed by educational and other forms of scholarship in determining this (Biesta, 2010; cf. Carlsson, 2015; p. 206). As we will argue, this is because health-related discourses in education are freighted with overt and covert meanings regarding what is reasonable, inclusive and well-intentioned in the broad terrains of curriculum and pedagogy, even as there remains the distinct possibility that certain matters may be routinely or deliberately excluded, particular topics never seem to be broached or put at risk, just as much as some people involved in education aren't always willing or able to speak about what is critical for health and wellbeing across communities, including over various dimensions and features of diverse lifespans and broader, traditional and post-traditional lifeworlds. In other words, there is a particular politics and scope to the practice of health education and health promotion in schools as much as there are to public and research debates about health and wellbeing (Bacchi, 2012).

In what follows, we rework our opening remarks through a relatively simple analytical strategy, driven by a deliberate distinction we make between: (a) the critical question of health education, and (b) the question of critical health education. For the former question, and following Biesta's lead (2014), we recognise it is important to ask not only *how* (what works in health education?) but also *why* (what has become the purposes of health education, their rationale and underlying values?) in relation to the *what* of health education (e.g. what is the content of health education and what is desired as an outcome?). While for the latter question, we propose that its very nature shifts. It invites us to ask not only what, how and why might 'critical health education' look through a particular lens, but also what happens if we treat such questions of what it means to be 'healthy', 'educated for health' and ´health literate', as radically open and not those that require answers before we engage in a critical curriculum exercise.

As we hope to demonstrate throughout our commentary and illustration of these points, we regard these two questions as intertwined and mutually constitutive for health and wellbeing education, whether that be in the registers and grammars of theoretical interest or the imagined or experienced worlds of empirical study. Indeed, being traceable to various strands of critical sensibility and concerns about the 'physical' in education in mass systems, contemporary

educational institutions and everyday life, we note there is a growing range of studies and reviews that show they have both direct as much as indirect ramifications for policy and practice in curriculum and pedagogy, including their research and development (e.g. Leahy, Burrows, McCuaig, Wright, & Penney, 2016; Leahy, Wright, & Penney, 2017; Penney, 2006, 2013). Key to such concerns is how health and wellbeing educators as much as education researchers and critical scholars might recover and rethink policy and practice in light of the current politics of health and wellbeing, especially as the political becomes inevitably pedagogical.

However, even with a most cursory literature review in mind, it can also be argued that studies addressing health and wellbeing in curricula and schools provide very little if any consensus concerning an associated education's purposes, desired outcomes, effective teaching strategies, or legitimate curriculum content. At some level, this is because the theoretical landscape has been typically described through reference to two general discourses. Each discourse is designated with a range of signifiers and each privileges a particular onto-epistemological paradigm for health and wellbeing education that, it is argued, cannot be readily reconciled to the other (Green, Tones, Cross, & Woodall, 2015).

The first and most prevalent is the bio-medical discourse, which is typically (or/and pejoratively?) portrayed as traditional, individualistic, preventive, moralistic, or behaviour-regulating. The second is the socio-ecological discourse, the proponents of which, for example, associate it with the critical, structural, participatory, setting-based, or emancipatory. In general, traditional approaches are represented as maintaining a narrow focus on students' knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviour concerning individual lifestyles and health risks, whereas critical approaches are regarded as having a focus on the development of more comprehensive competences, motivations, and dispositions of students to critically reflect upon and deal with socio-cultural and other health determinants. In other words, the emphasis in a socio-ecological discourse requires a move away from a focus on individual lifestyles towards critically engaging broader issues such as equity, democracy and social justice related to health and wellbeing (Simovska, 2013).

Desired learning outcomes can also be contrasted in these two discourses. In a traditional mode, health education tends to revolve around a curriculum that provides improved propositional knowledge and specific life-skills related to health and wellbeing, while that for a critical mode will tend to include a focus on developing students' critical consciousness, empowerment and emancipation related to health and wellbeing within a wider socio-ecological perspective. In short, traditional health education prioritises the improvement of the health and wellbeing status of individual students, while in critical approaches, the aim is not only to better one's health and wider conditions for health, but also to improve education outcomes (Carlsson & Simovska, 2012; Flaschberger & Gugglburger, 2015).

Rises in temperature at the crux of the various debates between parties from such contrasting 'camps' may be easily fuelled by focusing on such differences. The differences serve to polarise underlying or common values in the field of health and wellbeing, and draw lines of distinction between the reasons and effects of individualistic discourses on the one hand, and those that support a socio-ecological paradigm on the other. For example, typically, the pedagogical frameworks within the first are characterised (by their proponents as much as opponents) as positivist and post-positivist, and within the second, as interpretivist, participatory and post-structural. However, it is fair to say that the discourses within each of these broad categorisations are not homogeneous either. Across the many forms and shapes of critical school-based health and wellbeing education, various aspects of 'criticality' come to light, each with different rationales and outworkings. For example, the paradigm of Health Promoting Schools (HPS) emphasises that a socio-ecological and action-oriented approach to health education might enhance crossdisciplinarity and increase schools' and students' capacity for participation in democratic processes and 'real-life' health problems in the community (Jensen, Schnack, & Simovska, 2000; Reid, Bruun Jensen, Simovska & Nikel, 2008; Clift & Jensen, 2005; Simovska & McNamara, 2015).

Further, the concept of 21st century competencies includes education for health/wellbeing, citizenship, sustainability, and moral education (Voogt & Roblin, 2012); while the EU's strategy Europe 2020 points to health literacy as one of the necessary competencies to navigate ever changing, globalised societies. Finally, within the context of educational reforms internationally, there seems to be an emerging political consensus that wellbeing should be one of the prioritised aims for schools along with academic attainment, based on evidence that wellbeing and learning are interconnected and represent constituting resources for one another (World Health Organization, 2016).

Against this backdrop then, our aim in developing this essay is to add nuance to these debates, by unpacking a sense of the complexity in the field as much as the various formulations of critical debate. We do this by pointing to what constitutes the 'light' as much as the 'shade' that is tied up in notions of critical health education. Our spotlight is on the forms of critique offered in articles published in the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* over the last two decades, which can be categorised as broadly belonging to a critical discourse of school-based health and wellbeing education. Our core question is how the 'critical' and 'critical themes' within health education and the current attempts to conceptualise a link between health and wellbeing in an educational context might be viewed within a shared framework that exhibits different aspects of critique, as made evident in the assumptions, problematisations and implications that can be detected within these studies. Put more figuratively, we ask which 'shades of the critical' are cast over this specific subfield of curriculum studies, and what might be held to be the consequences and prospects of such an analysis for future research and development of critical health education?

Analysing the critical

The analytical perspective we bring to our enterprise draws upon two key notions: problematisation in policy research (e.g. Bacchi, 2016), and styles of critique, as suggested by Biesta and Stams (2001). Briefly, and in reverse order, Biesta and Stams ground their observations in various synoptic considerations of the philosophy of critique to posit a framework populated by three main styles.

First, *critical dogmatism*, which is construed as the application of a criterion to form an evaluative judgement. This usually proceeds as though the criterion itself is not included in the operation, but it can be taken for granted, as in the exercise of a particular ideological critique of gender and body image in health education settings.

Second, *transcendental critique*, which represents a response to the paradox arising from the recognition of the existence of apparent structures that can be uncovered and demystified alongside the need to still justify a criterion to formulate an evaluative judgement. Within this style of critique, this might be achieved by making a shift from the framework of the philosophy of consciousness to that of the philosophy of language (Apel, 1980, in Biesta & Stams, 2001, p. 62). In other words, and to continue our illustration, how a scholar narrates gender and body image in their study will typically become much more self-conscious discursively, if not stylistically.

Third, *deconstruction* (Derrida, 1978), which offers a style of critique that suggests a further step away from traditional notions of criticism and critique. At its core, this style challenges the very possibility of articulating and controlling the conditions of possibility for argumentation within language and history from outside the structures that shaped that. In this, the critical work of deconstruction consists of troubling the assumptions of the deconstructive critic from a quasi-position of possibility, that is, a position of *differance*. In other words, differance invites a style of critique that tries to show the inside and outside to a critical discourse simultaneously, whilst also affording the possibility of affirming that which was previously excluded in what is now included within the endeavour itself. As in our previous illustration, why privilege the critical interpretations and experiences of the researcher of curriculum, gender and body image, for example, when the

researched may be equally able to offer (and defend) their own, be that through a double hermeneutic, or distributed reflexivity, (Giddens, 1984)?

Moving to Bacchi's (2016) perspective and her work in health policy research, our analytical focus gains a second dimension, that of considering the content of the argumentation. This entails work that unpacks how problems are constituted and thus how these determine what is suggested as desirable and possible, or undesirable and impossible in health and wellbeing education (cf. Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011).

Bacchi (2016) has developed a heuristic for these purposes based on the surfacing of four classical discourses to certain onto-epistemological sensitivities: positivism, interpretivism, critical realism, and poststructuralism. From here, she challenges a tendency of authors to refer to 'problems' as a neutral starting point for critical analysis, since how a problem is construed in each onto-epistemology differs markedly. To move forwards, she suggests, we require an analysis of 'What is the Problem Represented to be?' (a WPR approach). This requires scholars to hold that problems are not treated as phenomena outside of policy, waiting to be solved, but rather that they are brought into existence through practices, and thus produced within policies and policy rationales (Bletsas, 2012). As Bacchi (2012, p. 151) previously noted, we should attend to the dimensions implied by an ontological politics, and thus regard a problem representation as the way in which 'a particular policy "problem" is constituted *as the real*' (italics in the original).

Thus a key task within a WPR approach is to distinguish between matters, real and imagined, in the kaleidoscopic and cascading realities of policy discourses too, given that we are governed not so much by the policies but by the problematisations to which they respond to or seek to anticipate in the real world of practice. In educational circles and realms, for example, this might include 'the frameworks of sense and obviousness with which policy is thought, talked and written about' (Ball, 2006, p. 44). In short, in Bacchi's terms (2016, p. 12), 'problem representations are treated as political interventions that need to be contested at the level of what they 'produce', rather than treated as 'the views of various groups of social actors about the nature of those problems' (p. 7), the risk of the latter being a much shallower and disengaged form of ontological politics.

So for this project, while we can recognise that the linguistic turns implied within interpretivism, critical realism and poststructuralism suggests a strong link between experience and language, we hold that this link is not automatically established in scholarship but must be subject to scrutiny as it is constructed through a means of argumentation (Biesta & Stams, 2001) and moreover, through any act of self-problematisation (Bacchi, 2016). Moreover, the criterion of justification is typically construed as a 'meta-institution of rational argumentation', within the ideal community of communication, e.g. the 'curriculum studies community' as it intersects with, and even contests other communities of interpretation and practice (Biesta & Stams, 2001, p. 63).

Moreover, following Bacchi, a key analytical manoeuvre becomes that of recognising the discourse analyst does not have to submit to the constraints of moderate constructivism, but rather embrace a perspective where actors are understood to be immersed in the governing of knowledges, including 'unexamined ways of thinking' when they seek to influence the world of practice through their scholarship, e.g. as critically engaged scholars. An expectation of the analysis then, should be that it creates a space to think critically about the proposals for change within or implied by a study, including via self-critique, such that rather than require curriculum practice or policy to conform to a particular critical theory, the analysis might offer something akin to what Foucault (in Bacchi, 2016, p. 10) suggests is marked out as a 'govern[ing] with a minimum of domination'.

This particular way of looking through both lenses then—coupling, for example, notions of deconstruction and differance that Derrida suggests to a self-problematisation when looking at 'what is the problem represented to be?', apropos Bacchi—suggests a hybridised style of critique that offers a radically different 'optics'. It moves not only away from the 'monocularism' that presumes a taken for granted, 'outside' foundation of critical dogmatism and positivism, but also

away from that of the internal position of testing the performative consistency or plurality of meanings, as in the transcendental or interpretivist critique. In other words, it is style of critique that invites questioning of its own oracular assumptions, by moving towards an affirmation of that which is typically excluded from the aforementioned perspectives: the 'other' and the 'constitutive outside', such that justice takes priority to rationality (Biesta & Stams, 2001).

So in combining these two perspectives, alongside omitting from our review those papers that we characterise as critical dogmatic and positivistic approaches to health education, our analysis focuses on distinguishing between various critical approaches oriented towards the transcendental (interpretivism and critical realism) and towards deconstruction (poststructuralism). These different shades of criticality share in common what Davies (2014) expects to be of the kinds of ideals any given critical perspective should fulfil; that is, to make possible thinking differently, and relatedly, opening up the possibility of acting differently by making the present unthinkable (Foucault, 2000a). Nevertheless, we must still recognise that transcendental approaches are based on the assumption that the attainment of knowledge of transcendental structures of various kinds is desirable and is in fact possible (Habermas, 1971, 1984; Ricoeur, 1977), including knowledge about the constructs and conditions of health and wellbeing. That being said, it may appear that deconstructive approaches are based on the exact opposite assumption, namely the impossibility of essential or transcendental truths beneath apparent structures (Hart, 2014). How to navigate this tension? For Davies (2014, p. 448) a legitimate standpoint or positioning of the researcher must be both humble and cautious as much as it is critical and committed, as it:

- does not involve taking up the god-perspective, but positions the researcher-self as also taken up in discourse and context and relational positioning of self and other;
- makes clear how relations of power are at work on researcher and on research subjects during the research process—revealing who provides the terms of reference, who listens and how the researcher listens and what openness the researcher brings to the other and to difference;
- acknowledges the limits of self-knowledge and of knowledge of the other.

A further qualification is in order for this essay. Interpretivist and critical realist forms of critique emphasise the continuing relevance of the object of critique as being 'ideology' in some form; they position agency, self-understanding and pluralism as central to understanding social organisation, and shift from aims of prediction and control to aims of understanding and transcending (Scott, 2005). The 'critical' then is assumed to originate in a practice of demystification, of unmasking hidden, underlying power dynamics from beneath a superficial blanket of discourse that obscures the base.

Within critical theory and especially the Frankfurt School's second generation, to demystify is a hallmark of its critical ambition. Developing further the dimensions in Apel's transcendental pragmatic, for example, Habermas accentuates the potential of social critique to uncover rational strategies of legitimacy within a given communicative context (Habermas, 1971, 1984). In this way, according to Habermas, the practice of critique requires the demystification of communication: we must first seek to identify the 'mystifying' elements within a communicative discourse to then make it possible via a transcendentally grounded 'non-mystificatory critique' to establish a rational, argumentative form of communication (Lingua, 2012, p. 57). The goal then is to exchange an illegitimate form for communicative practice with a legitimate one based on the classical Enlightenment ideals of rationality. To wit, as Foucault (2000b, pp. 456–457) puts it:

> A critique does not consist in saying that things aren't good the way they are. It consists in seeing on what type of assumptions, of familiar notions, of established, unexamined ways of thinking the accepted practices are based. …
>
> Criticism consists in uncovering that thought and trying to change it; showing that things are not as obvious as people believe, making it so that what is taken for granted is no longer taken for granted. To do criticism is to make harder those acts which are now too easy…

> … as soon as people begin to have trouble thinking things the way they have been thought, transformation becomes at the same time very urgent, very difficult, and entirely possible.

Equally, both Biesta and Stams (2001) and Bacchi (2015) have pointed to the potential of leaving the Enlightenment ideal of transcendental stances of critique behind in favour of a postmodern, poststructuralist, deconstructive criticality (as noted earlier as constituting a third style of critique within our analytical framework). As a form of criticality itself, it seeks to (re)present structures and discourse without ultimately retracting to onto-epistemological positions external to the object at hand. Commitments to establishing notions of 'truth' are replaced by an emphasis on critically understanding discourses and the constitutive role of knowledge practices (Bacchi, 2016, p. 8). Nothing is taken for granted in the 'objects, 'subjects' or 'problems' that constitute the basis for critique (Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). While to follow Mol (2002), such an approach gives play to the idea that analytical methods are 'not a way of opening a window on the world, but a way of interfering with it. They act, they *mediate* between an object and its representations. One way or another. Inevitably' (p. 155, emphasis in original).

Reviewing the literature: principles, priorities and practices

With the above considerations in mind, we selected papers from the *Journal of Curriculum Studies* to be included in this collection on the basis of a variety of critical literature search and review techniques (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2014; Cherryholmes, 1993; Poulson & Wallace, 2004). These methods emphasise the importance of not simply looking for gaps in research, areas of neglect, or new possibilities for theory application, but rather fostering outcomes of problematisations of research that 'challenge assumptions'. By this, for example, Alvesson and Sandberg (2013) recommend applying a set of review activities that set out to critically scrutinise paradigmatic assumptions and, when motivated, suggest alternative ones (Table 1). This is because during a critical review of the literature (Avelsson & Sandberg, 2014, p.26), it is

Table 1. The problematisation methodology and its key elements (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2013).

Aim of the problematisation methodology					
Generating novel research questions through a *dialectical interrogation* of one's own familiar position, other stances, and the literature domain targeted for assumption challenging					
A typology of assumptions open for problematisation					
In-house	*Root metaphor*		*Paradigm*	*Ideology*	*Field*
Assumptions that exist within a specific school of thought	Broader images of a particular subject matter underlying existing literature		Ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions underlying existing literature	Political-, moral-, and gender-related assumptions underlying existing literature	Assumptions about a specific subject matter that are shared across different theoretical schools
Principles for identifying and challenging assumptions					
1. *Identify a domain of literature*:	2. *Identify and articulate assumptions*:	3. *Evaluate articulated assumptions*:	4. *Develop alternative assumptions*:	5. *Relate assumptions to audience*:	6. *Evaluate alternative assumptions*:
What main bodies of literature and key texts make up the domain?	What major assumptions underlie the literature within the identified domain?	Are the identified assumptions worthy to be challenged?	What alternative assumptions can be developed?	What major audiences hold the challenged assumptions?	Are the alternative assumptions likely to generate a theory that will be regarded as interesting by the audiences targeted?

not enough to improve existing theory, it also needs to challenge its audience's taken-for-granted assumptions in some significant way. The alternative—i.e. business-as-usual in using theory to read and write empirical studies (as if one can 'read off' from a theory such that the main task is to locate confirming and disconfirming instances)—is somewhat ironic (p.25):

> The specific framework is applied, perhaps even imposed on the object of study, which means that the object of study is typically being constructed in line with the favoured approach. Gender students find discrimination and Foucauldians find power exercising disciplinary effects.

So why is problematisation telling analytically, if not simply to disrupt such monotony and predictability in reviewing research (Bacchi, 2015)? For Alvesson and Sandberg, the practice of reading and writing about scholarly activities must work with other-than-positivist principles to stand a better chance of fostering interesting and novel insights. These principles may emerge from a range of sources and be combined in a range of ways, but what emerges would tend to suggest two clear priorities:

(1) Critically scrutinising dominating assumptions and, when motivated, suggesting alternative ones.
(2) Finding and solving a mystery in empirical studies.

In this instance, we put such principles and priorities into practice in a range of steps, the first of which was conducting a search for the terms 'health' and 'wellbeing' in the journal database, reviewing 'finds' from the last 20 years. (The 'we' here requires a recognition too: we are variously students, editors and professors in this field, insiders and outsiders to this area of curriculum study, highly active within and constitutive of the research community, as much as constituted by or critical friends to various aspects of it too, as illustrated by our curriculum vitae.) The articles where the terms featured figuratively and thus were not tied to human beings, were excluded from the nascent findings—for example, when the term 'health' was used to describe the idea of a healthy deliberative democracy, and thus referred to cultural diversity and interaction rather than an aspect related to health or wellbeing education. A further criterion for inclusion was reviewing the abstract or/and text for an implicit or explicit emphasis on a critical perspective on the relation between health and wellbeing within educational settings.

The initial search of the journal's archives generated a pool of 285 articles where either one term or both were present in a meaningful and significant way (i.e. aligning with the aforementioned purposes of this exercise). Following a closer reading of each potential entry, the list was narrowed down to those that could also be categorised as relating to the forms of the 'critical' outlined above. A commonality in all such studies was that their authors sought to challenge the traditional health education approach and its focus on propositional curriculum knowledge and behaviour regulation related to health and wellbeing. This led to a final collection of 15 articles that could be analysed in depth (Table 2).

We then applied critical reading questions to surface how the authors identified and challenged assumptions to help address what was presented and understood by 'critical' in the problematisation underpinning each study, and to clarify how the notion was articulated and represented in the various definitions and operationalisations of concepts, analyses and discussions, including how consistent, rigorous and innovative these were. For example, pace Kellner (2003, 59/8), might the notion of critical signify 'a way of seeing and conceptualising, a constructing of categories, making connections, mapping, and engaging in the practice of theory-construction, and relating theory to practice'? Or how did the authors position curriculum and pedagogy to suggest its primary purpose was to address 'the specific features of actually existing capitalist societies, and their relations of domination and subordination, contradictions and openings for progressive social change, and transformative practices that will create what the theory projects as a better life and society' (ibid.)?

Table 2. The critical papers published in *Journal of Curriculum Studies* included in the analysis.

Author(s)	Title	Publication year
Ross Brooker, Doune Macdonald	Did we hear you? Issues of student voice in a curriculum innovation	1999
David Kirk, Doune MacDonald	Teacher voice and ownership of curriculum change	2001
Kimberly L. Oliver, Rosary Lalik	The body as curriculum: Learning with adolescent girls	2001
Kimberly L. Oliver, Rosary Lalik	'The Beauty Walk, this ain't my topic': learning about critical inquiry with adolescent girls	2004
Bjarne Bruun Jensen	Environmental and health education viewed from an action-oriented perspective: a case from Denmark	2004
Sharon Anne Cook	From 'evil influence' to social facilitator: representations of youth smoking, drinking, and citizenship in Canadian health textbooks, 1890–1960	2008
John Quay, Jacqui Peters	Skills, strategies, sport, and social responsibility: reconnecting physical education	2008
Venka Simovska, Bjarne Bruun Jensen	On-line learning environments and participatory health education: teachers' reflections	2008
Thomas S. Popkewitz	Curriculum study, curriculum history, and curriculum theory: the reason of reason	2009
Erik Backman	Friluftsliv: a contribution to equity and democracy in Swedish Physical Education? An analysis of codes in Swedish Physical Education curricula	2011
Amanda Hargreaves	The perceived value of Health Education in schools: New Zealand secondary teachers' perceptions	2013
Kimberly L. Oliver, Heather A. Oesterreich	Student-centred inquiry as curriculum as a model for field-based teacher education	2013
Starlin Musingarabwi, Sylvan Blignaut	Theorizing the implementation of the HIV/AIDS curriculum in Zimbabwe	2015
Venka Simovska, Aasa Kremer Prøsch	Global social issues in the curriculum: perspectives of school principals	2016
Ariel Sarid	Rethinking the modernist curriculum with Habermas' concept of self-critical appropriation	2017

Shades of the critical

As Ryan and Bernard (2003, 85) note, analysing text for themes typically involves several basic tasks:

> (1) discovering themes and subthemes, (2) winnowing themes to a manageable few (i.e. deciding which themes are important in any project), (3) building hierarchies of themes …, and (4) linking themes into theoretical models.

Accordingly, our activities distilled a range of initial thematics in the studies into six key themes concerning a critical approach to health and wellbeing education (Table 3).

How the authors of these papers challenged traditional health education assumptions was then further theorised as the deployment of a variety of shades of criticality, which in some of the studies, could be identified as a dominant shade, and more a blend in others; the key features of which we now sketch.

Interpretive, transcendental shades

Three papers (Jensen, 2004; Simovska & Jensen, 2008; Simovska & Prøsch, 2016) in the thematic category 'aims, content, pedagogy and learning outcomes of health education' are studies

Table 3. Content focus of the critical papers published in *Journal of Curriculum Studies*.

Thematic categories
A. Health education aims, content, pedagogy and learning outcomes
B. Physical activity education beyond the physical
C. Students' voices in health education
D. The body, gender and critical literacy
E. Teacher agency and curriculum enactment
F. Historical and conceptual analyses of health education curricula

grounded in the context of Danish schooling. These papers address health education, and in some cases, environmental education and education for sustainable development too, from a common conceptual framework of 'action-oriented', 'democratic' and 'participatory' education, to represent a Danish version of 'critical health education and health promoting schools discourse' (Jensen et al., 2000).

In the first article, Jensen (2004) delineates four key concepts characterising the aims and expected outcomes of health (and environmental) education, if it is to challenge traditional, behaviour-regulation oriented approaches: *multidimensional knowledge, interdisciplinarity, action*, and *action competence*. A key assumption here is that curriculum content should be multidisciplinary and multidimensional, focusing on a wide range of knowledge domains as well as on ways of knowing, rather than relay ready-made, propositional, bio-medical binary categories of 'healthy' and 'non-healthy'. The aims and expected outcomes are framed as developing students' action competence, that is, their ability to take reflective action, alone or together with others to bring about positive health-related changes in health determinants on a micro (school or local community) level.

In a similar vein, Simovska and Jensen (2008) examine teachers' experience with an action-oriented and participatory health education approach for a web-based, cross-cultural educational development project involving schools from four countries in Europe. Their study discusses teachers' views on the enactment of the aforementioned concepts in teaching, with a particular focus on the changing role of the teacher: the crux of which is it is critical for the teacher to shift from a gatekeeper of knowledge to a facilitator of processes of knowing.

Next, Simovska and Prøsch (2016) explore the views of school principals about the potentials and barriers for health education and education for sustainable development within the context of Danish school reform (characterised as it is by neoliberal values). Their discussion is framed by a critical view of school leadership discourses and in particular, the challenges faced by leaders related to the move from traditional democratic governance to a more detailed steering and leadership of the pedagogical and curricular formats that the reform prescribes. The authors discuss the consequences of this shift in terms of integrated curricular topics such as health, and the limitations of their potentiality to contribute to action competence development, participation and democracy, as required in the national curriculum documents.

In advocating for a similarly critical mode of education, but this time in the context of physical education (PE) curriculum in schools in Australia, Quay and Peters (2008) discuss PE and the curbs on its potentials when it comes to fostering social justice. They suggest a model of teaching which tries to combine several prominent models in the field (e.g. with subcomponents related to experiential education, the taking of personal responsibility, gaming, motor skills, seasonality, and so on). Their call is for professional development to enable generalist rather than specialist PE teachers, because the generalist is better than the specialist at enacting PE of high quality, that is, aligned with the interests of the students (as ends) and including broader curriculum outcomes (as means) that transcend a specialist focus on physical activity alone. This implies rethinking the boundaries between the otherwise separate curriculum domains of health education, PE, and outdoor education in the school curricula in Australia. The divisions themselves are criticised from the perspective of advocating a comprehensive, whole school approach to health education and health promotion in schools, combining domain knowledge with supportive school policies and practices that integrate students' interests too.

To elaborate, Dewey's notion of experiential education is used as a theoretical perspective to illustrate the rationale of connecting the students with the curriculum in ways which transcend a simple child-centred and teacher-centred dichotomy. The approach values an emphasis on temporal continuities between past, present and future, engaging both students and teachers in the critical learning required about curriculum content (Young, 1998). The critical pedagogical task is to connect the students' present and immediate future with knowledge and skills rooted in the past (Quay & Peters, 2008, p. 606), through an emergent focus which includes historicised personal and

social components as well as activities conducive to the development of physical activity skills and fitness. Similar to the participatory teaching strategies in the papers from the Danish context discussed above, this perspective infers students' engagement should go beyond simply captivating student attention through activities that would be considered fun, enjoyable or interesting by the children. Rather, the teaching strategy requires an enactment of aspects of personal and social responsibility in PE, tentatively organised into a continuum of 'lack of responsibility' to 'helping others' and 'leadership outside of PE', thus linking PE with broader notions of health, wellbeing, social responsibility and social justice.

The next paper in this category (Backman, 2011) offers an analysis of codes in Swedish PE curricula. Backman's study focuses on the provision of one aspect, outdoor education, mindful as we are that in the previous study, Young (1998, p.72) was invoked by its authors to ask, how can health and wellbeing related education be:

> more connective (within the subject, with other aspects of the curriculum, and with lives and societies beyond schools) and express a "lifetime approach" to education?

Backman explores such concerns at the level of the *translation* of the national curriculum aims into local specialised syllabuses developed by teachers. The theoretical framework employs Bernstein's notions of *classification* (weak or strong), *framing*, and *codes* (collection code, integrated code, competence code, and performance code). The conclusion to the study is that outdoor education has a weak classification in relation to other teaching content in PE (subject boundaries), which allows for it to be ignored without being noticed. Consequently, outdoor education is typically reduced rather than transformed into (narrow) orienteering and sports practices as opposed to more comprehensive, holistic ones. Hence, the potential for this dimension to contribute to the equity and democracy intended in the national curriculum aims is severely limited.

Together, these five studies can be characterised as illustrating the assumptions and problematisations that align with what we previously outlined as an interpretive, transcendental research paradigm. The criticality of the authors is expressed by drawing on critical educational theories with roots in the Frankfurt School to offer an explicit value foundation illustrated by, for example, stressing the importance of involving students and other actors in the agenda setting (see also Rider, 2015). As Kellner (2003, 58/7) outlines:

> Since social conditions and life are constantly changing, a critical theory of education must be radically historicist, attempting to reconstruct education as social conditions evolve and to create pedagogical alternatives in terms of the needs, problems, and possibilities of specific groups of people in concrete situations. Yet philosophical and normative insight and critique is also needed, driving efforts at reconstructing education and society by visions of what education and human life could be and what are their specific limitations in existing societies.
>
> Hence, a critical theory of education involves conceiving of what education could be, in how radicalizing education could help change society.

Accordingly, the following, mutually entangled 'objects of critique' can be identified across these studies:

- *Curriculum content*: Rather than a narrow propositional knowledge focusing on ill health and risks related to health, multidimensional knowledge is recommended including knowledge of social determinants of health as well as the importance of values, cultural dimensions, and students' visions related to health and wellbeing. Also, critical health education content serves to highlight issues of social justice, equity and democracy related to health, mirroring the fact that a critical theory of education has to demonstrate a critical theory of society if it is to offer both social critique and social transformation in an associated curriculum and pedagogy.

- *Expected learning outcomes*: Accordingly, the authors of the studies suggest a move away from individualism, behaviour-regulation and skills, towards more comprehensive learning outcomes with reference to the development of capacity for democratic participation and social responsibility for equality and social justice.
- *Teaching strategies*: The critique focuses on problematisations of critical health issues that may be resolved through the practice of participatory pedagogies, where participation is interpreted as more than taking part and interactivity—it implies students' influence over the content and methods of teaching and learning (i.e. a certain degree of curriculum power).
- *Curriculum reforms*: Each study includes critical discussion of (neoliberal) school reforms and the limitations these bring to engaging with the critical questions in health education in schools.

Critique at the threshold between the interpretive and poststructural

Our first study that typifies the shades between two categories, is by Sarid (2017). It can be positioned on the threshold between an interpretive and poststructural paradigm given its attempt to re-actualize the Habermasian principle of self-critical appropriation within the context of curriculum theory and organization of school subjects. On the one hand, Sarid wishes to maintain modernist principles within curriculum theory whilst simultaneously acknowledging and responding to a number of challenges related to post-modern positions. The principle of self-appropriation—signifying the dynamic, self-reflective process whereby a person becomes aware and takes responsibility of herself—acts as a mediator of two opposing curricular tendencies formulated as the curriculum dilemma. On the one side is the postmodern engagement of transcending or breaking down traditional boundaries between knowledge domains and social or everyday life. On the other modernist side lies the strict distinction between knowledge and the lived, social life giving way to vulnerabilities of abusive power dynamics (p. 460). To straddle this dual positioning, Sarid emphasises the significance of a form of critical self-appropriation understood as creating an existential discourse that also serves as a mediator in curriculum construction processes, incorporating both the need of individuals to shape and account for their own everyday life, and the integration of expert knowledge cultures and social expectations.

The next two studies within this category move us further into the field of PE curriculum, with a focus on the negotiation and power of students' voice in curriculum construction and experience, from a range of perspectives. While Oliver and Oesterreich (2013) discuss a model for teacher professional development building on student-centred inquiry *as* curriculum, Brooker and Macdonald (1999) provide a critique of how 'student voice' has been positioned in curriculum development and innovation. What the authors of both studies have in common is a view of curriculum as a *process* rather than a *thing*, as illustrated in the following quotation:

> It [the curriculum] becomes a verb, an action, a social practice, a private meaning, and a public hope. Curriculum is not just the site of our labor, it becomes the product of our labor, changing as we are changed by it' (Pinar, Reynolds, Slattery, & Taubman, 1995; p. 848, cited in Oliver & Oesterreich (2013; p. 409).

For Oliver and Oesterreich (2013), this is apparent in student-centred inquiry *as* curriculum, an approach used in a field-based teacher education course for PE teachers in pre-service training in the USA. The model is used with a view of enabling student-teachers to listen and respond to the voices of their students when planning and enacting a PE curriculum in school. The authors define student-centred inquiry *as* curriculum as a dynamic co-created process situated in the historical, then localised in lived unfolding experiences of both students and teachers. Understanding curriculum as process involves ongoing interaction with the autobiographies of the students and teachers, negotiation of student voices and social construction of the content, contextualised in the history of the subject matter, and the standards of the profession (ibid: p. 409, p. 414). The fundamental aim of the authors is to challenge not only teacher education focused on technical

skills and devaluing professional judgement, but also a positioning of the school PE curricula as decontextualised and isolated from the lived experience of students.

Brooker and Macdonald (1999) build on what they call a reflective critique of a PE curriculum development project based on commissioned evaluation of this project in Queensland, Australia. Their study also focuses on the ways in which student voices are included in curriculum making. However, although the evaluation intended to include the voices of the students, the analysis the authors present places the emphasis (in terms of quantity and quality of data generation) on teachers' perspectives. A risk then, is despite claims to criticality, the content of the questions asked to students remains of a superficial nature and the focus remains on implementation of the curriculum rather than on curriculum making processes; in other words, even within the article, the student voices are filtered, regulated and sanitised.

The next two studies can be understood as critical responses to such apparent shortcomings. Their authors create a combination of critical, feminist and post-structural perspectives that intersect in the following two aspects of critique:

- *The definition of curriculum*: critique is focused on deconstructing the very notion of curriculum: both studies treat the curriculum as a dynamic rather than static, linear phenomenon, a process rather than a thing, situated in sociocultural, historical and political landscapes. Both sets of authors call for creating broader spaces for the negotiation and co-construction of meanings through curriculum as process, the redistribution of power and influence by involving lived experience, and the unsettling of the autobiographies of teachers and students through dynamic, critical curriculum making processes.
- *Student voice*: both studies recommend substantial, meaningful and authentic involvement of the students in the planning, implementing and evaluating curriculum designs, and at the same time caution against idealisation, ritualisation and the trivialisation of student involvement.

The studies are in fact, written by the same authors (Oliver & Lalik, 2001, 2004). In both studies, Oliver and Lalik focus on the critique of hegemonic representations of the social body in relation to dominant cultural narratives, and the consequences of this for young African-American 'adolescent girls' in middle schools. Some of these young female students, according to the authors, internalise dominant discourses and develop bodily relations charged with shame and dissatisfaction (2001), be that through the hidden curriculum or trying to be 'noticed' and 'beautiful' in the company of others, including through critique of 'other' girls. Their discussion is informed by critical educational perspectives and poststructural feminist scholarship, citing (2004, p.557) for example, Penney and Chandler (2000, p. 73) who contend that curriculum and pedagogical practices ought to nurture:

> the development of critically informed citizens who are committed to playing a part in establishing more equitable societies in which all individuals are valued; in which individual, social and cultural differences are celebrated as a richness of society; and in which knowledge is something to be collectively, collaboratively and creatively advanced, rather than pre-defined and 'delivered'.

The criticality offered in their studies tries to maintain a critical distance from ideological critique (Oliver & Lalik, 2004, p. 557) but it also revolves around the possibilities that transformative pedagogies, enacted across different subjects, might hold in terms of the development of critical literacy of female students. At its core is the need for curriculum to develop and support their ability to 'read' and 'resist' hegemonic discourses as represented in through particular practices and beliefs about body image.

Three mutually intertwined aspects of critique, fluctuating between the interpretive and the poststructural, emerge in these two studies:

- *Curriculum 'ownership'*: the studies ask key questions such as who 'owns' the curriculum, how is this ownership negotiated and what are the interactions, tensions and contradictions in this respect.
- *'Curricularisation of the body'*: critique revolves around the dominant discourses in the representations of the female body in the overt and hidden curriculum, as well as in the media and other social practices important for the lives of young female students. The studies emphasise the importance of the body as constitutive to a curriculum-based learning process conducive to the development of capacities for resistance and agency, i.e. learning the language of critique, and deciding for oneself and with others the preferred critique, rather than adopting a preconceived one.
- *Emancipation as oppression*: the papers, especially Oliver and Lalik (2004) raise important questions related to tensions within critical pedagogy, including the hidden, potentially hegemonic nature of liberating intentions. Drawing on feminist scholarship (e.g. Lather, 1991) they include critical self-examination of the role of the researcher and of the risks of pursuing one's best intentions: to emancipate the students, to perpetuate relations of dominance, or to replace one oppressive discourse with another.

The last two studies in this category of criticality address the challenges that teachers face when engaging with a health education curriculum, including lack of support, and a lack of agency and influence.

In a study entitled 'The perceived value of health education in schools: New Zealand secondary teachers' perceptions', Hargreaves (2013) discusses the tensions between policy and curriculum expectations and the decision-making processes concerning curriculum at the school level. Recording a common finding (see, for example, Leahy et al., 2016) health education is attributed low value in schools and has a lower status compared to other subjects, despite positive views by students and parents. Overall, teachers experienced that the school policies, the whole-school environment and the management were not supportive to critically meaningful implementation of the health education curriculum.

Kirk and MacDonald (2001) elaborate on such matters, drawing on Bernstein's conceptualisation of the social construction of pedagogic discourse and on evidence from two curriculum reform projects in Australia. They discuss the limited space of ownership and influence for teachers within the discourse of curriculum implementation as different from the notion of curriculum transformation. Within the framework of implementation, the teachers' voices are located within the local contexts of curriculum implementation, building on their expertise concerning their students, colleagues, school structures and available resources. Although valuable, this limits teachers' involvement in and influence on curriculum development at national and state levels, thus setting up and reinforcing restrictions on their positioning as partners and co-producers in curriculum reform. Kirk and Macdonald suggest a more systematic strategy for involving teachers as partners not only in brief curriculum reform projects but in a continuous systematic renewal of curriculum. This, they contend, would allow for creating genuine rather than pseudo possibilities that dissolve the dichotomy of bottom-up and top-down approaches to curriculum reforms.

The aspects of critique in these two studies revolve around the following two issues for problematisation:

- *Teacher agency*: first, the positioning of teachers in the processes of curriculum enactment, but also prior to and along with that, their position in curriculum making and renewal. The studies challenge traditional curriculum implementation conceptualisations by revisiting the position of the teachers in an attempt to transcend bottom-up and top-down curriculum approaches by fully acknowledging and taking into account the currents and effects of institutional forces, complexities and contingencies related to curriculum making and implementation.

- *Whole-school approach*: listening to teachers' voices is not sufficient for a repositioning of teachers as agents in curriculum making and enactment. Health education is located within broader curriculum architectures including different subjects which are ascribed a range of values and status (e.g. as 'powerful knowledge') by different stakeholders. It is also embedded within particular constellations of policy at international, national, state, and local levels, and within subsystems of resource allocation, management and staff relations. In order to support teachers in the enactment of a health and wellbeing curriculum, a whole-school systemic approach is typically argued to be more beneficial than isolated teacher training initiatives (cp. Leahy et al., 2016).

Poststructural shades

The three studies within this category, where the poststructural or deconstructive shades of critique prevail, are based on historical and/or conceptual analytic approaches to the genealogy of various discourses of curriculum and ideas of curriculum enactment.

Musingarabwi and Blignaut (2015) start from acknowledging a lack of postmodern approaches to curriculum implementation that are based on the sense making perspectives of specific actors (e.g. teachers) related to the implementation processes of curriculum policies (although see Pringle & Pringle, 2012). Specifically, their paper focuses on disruptive curriculum implementation processes for an HIV/AIDS curriculum in classrooms aiming to specify a conceptual model that surfaces the significance of context and of individual sense making in concrete settings (e.g. schools) where the curriculum policies are to be implemented. They emphasise the need for a phenomenological-hermeneutic approach to curriculum enactment strategies, where the complex contexts and relationships between teachers, places and curriculum policies are taken into account (rather than adhering to traditional instruction-based guidelines) if regressive local contexts are to be transgressed.

Cook (2008) follows a more explicit historically oriented approach in an analysis of how young people's smoking and drinking behaviours are connected to notions and practices of citizenship in the curricula of Canadian schoolbooks between 1890 and 1960. On the one hand, the analysis identifies the development of different positions within a conceptual crossover between bodily and social pleasures, and on the other, health-related responsibilities. This historical analysis can be viewed as an attempt to characterise different aspects of the bio-medical discourse of health education and how this discourse has been related or been in tension historically, with the socio-ecological discourse concerned with participatory and civic virtues (for a further example, see Swabey & Penney, 2011).

Popkewitz's (2009) study combines conceptual and historical analysis by explicating the 'systems of reasons', i.e. the standards and rules governing practices of curriculum, schooling and teaching (Popkewitz, 2009, p. 303). Popkewitz represents a position founded in a post-modern analytical perspective on curriculum theory, particularly in relation to reforms and the changing meaning of concepts within diverging discursive regimes. For example, he argues that the notion of 'problem-solving' (through a notion of action competence, empowerment, etc.) in the curriculum helps theorise, regulate and rationalise processes aimed at changing students, both ordering and classifying their actual conduct as much as its possibilities and limits. The cultural themes are not only about what a child is, they are also forms of practice governing what a child could or should become. What counts as 'action competence' differentiates the qualities of the action competent child from those who fall outside the borders of normalcy: those 'at risk', 'disadvantaged', with 'low self-esteem' or 'ADHD'. According to Popkewitz then, social inclusion and exclusion linked to systems of reasons are intertwined processes as they can be said to be aspects of the same phenomenon, rather than being binaries of logic. In his own words: 'The very maps that target populations for rescue are also boundaries that

differentiate, divide, and cast out particular kinds of human into unlivable spaces' (Popkewitz, 2009, p. 305).

The deconstructive aspects of critique in these studies surface around two themes for problematisation:

- *Curriculum enactment as alchemy*: translation processes are not inevitable; rather they may serve to deconstruct the limits of what is considered as self-evident and require an examination of the curricular and policy technologies through which these very limits are constructed over time (Popkewitz, 2009, p. 308).
- *Historicity and temporality of the health education curriculum*: the causality of the present is challenged and made fragile while the past is revisited and deconstructed, both of which open up possibilities for other (curriculum) futures.

Provisional conclusions

Although our analysis shows how it might be possible to tentatively place the studies within a spectrum of shades of criticality, it also illustrates the folly of assuming hard boundaries between categories. Light and shade typically derive from multiple sources, projecting fields that may interact in complex ways depending on broader contextual factors. Our key point here is not to seek absolute precision about the sources, but ask what is illuminated and obscured as a result. As with our guiding question for this analysis, we ask how the critical is approached within health and wellbeing education and how attempts to link health and wellbeing in an educational context can be conceptualised within a framework that inhabits different aspects, assumptions and problematisations for critique.

Kellner (2003, 61/14) concluded:

> Crucially, a critical theory seeks to reconstruct education not to fulfil the agenda of capital and the high-tech industries, but to radically democratise education in order to advance the goals of progressive educators like Dewey, Freire, and Illich in cultivating learning that will promote the development of individuality, citizenship and community, social justice, and the strengthening of democratic participation in all modes of life.

Our reading of the selected studies shows a plurality of critical perspectives at work, even as the categorisation of which transcends binary distinctions of an either/or as if categories where the sole key to analysis. Rather, as with our reference to the notion of shades of criticality, we have tried to suggest something different and generative is possible for this field. Thus, instead of portraying a study as simply subscribing to a transcendental or deconstructivist perspective, it could be argued that any distinction becomes most useful if it is treated as an orienting analytical framework for illuminating a particular *object of critique* within each article (Brown, 2005). Taken together, the points of critique of different objects in the studies are assembled in complex and entangled ways in the discourses as (re)presented by the articles, i.e. as elements of similar yet dynamic set of phenomena related to health and wellbeing education, rather than as binaries to be excluded or included solely on the basis of brute logic.

Might a way forward for some scholarship be to move towards a form of 'post-critical' approach, which incorporates aspects from both side of the schism, as suggested by Payne (2015, 25), among others?

> At the risk of oversimplifying the term post-critical, its use incorporates aspects of critical theory, poststructural theory and phenomenological disposition or orientation, perhaps methodology, as they are informed by, for example, concerns about technologisation, socio-economic, gender, ethnicity, indigenous/colonial, land/sea, animal, and 'other' issues, notwithstanding tensions that exist both in and between each of those 'namings'.

It may not be necessary even if it is attractive to some. This is because in identifying themes for problematising the work of a field, Wendy Brown (2005, pp. 5–6) reminds us that critique has a veritable history 'that derives from the Greek *krisis'*, where:

> The sifting and sorting entailed in Greek *krisis* focused on distinguishing the true from the false, the genuine from the spurious, the beautiful from the ugly, and the right from the wrong, distinctions that involved weighing pros and cons of particular arguments—that is, evaluating and eventually judging evidence, reasons, or reasoning. *Krisis* thus comes close to what we would today call deliberation, and its connotations are quite remote from either negativity or scholasticism. Since this practice also has a restorative aim in relation to the literal crisis provoking it, there could be no such thing as "mere critique," "indulgent critique," or even "untimely critique." Rather, the project of critique is to set the times right again by discerning and repairing a tear in justice through practices that are themselves exemplary of the justice that has been rent.

For Brown, a hasty resort to a 'post' risks separating criticism and critique from a sense of crisis, even as a notion of 'critical condition' (as used in medical and political discourse) maintains its currency and value (p.7):

> A critical condition is thus a particular kind of call: an urgent call for knowledge, deliberation, judgement, and action to stave off catastrophe.

There is then, something of an irony to detect here: few in the health and wellbeing education and promotion field are rallied to act when a 'post-critical condition' is invoked. Thus rather than be either definitive or definite as to a preferred version of criticality, we hope for further evidence of a new form of critical attitude, one that transcends schisms between the criticalities of critical theory on the one side and poststructuralism on the other, so as to more closely correspond to our sense that there is a multitude of different forms of critique that can exist simultaneously, given the light and shade cast by the selected studies in this essay.

Critical positions then, might be viewed as both generative and incomplete, rather than saturated and closed, for reworking the politics and practices of health and wellbeing education. For as Alvesson and Sandberg (2014, 32) suggest:

> As we see it, the interplay between theory and empirical material is more about seeing the latter as a source of inspiration and a partner for critical dialogue than as a guide and ultimate arbitrator.

To be clear, on the one hand, terms such as 'action competence', 'empowerment' as well as 'critical' in the study of health education curriculum can be seen as not just helpful for theorising but also regulating and rationalising educational processes aimed at changing the wellbeing of students. Yet on the other, after Popkewitz, one's cultural assumptions can be viewed as speaking not only of what a child *is or should be* through curriculum, but also about the associated practices of governing what a child could *become*. In the spirit of Foucault, such curriculum critique could be seen as a kind of ethics of discomfort, making it more rather than less difficult to know how to improve the curricula of health and wellbeing education.

In summary, when the ways in which a field of study is (re)presented is questioned by resisting a simplistic 'reading off' of ideology or for the sake of ideology critique—fitting instances to pre-existing categories for example—other realities, agencies and resistances become possible, including through opening up other forms than those defined by fixed frameworks (Gylnos & Howarth, 2007). Offering other provisional 'namings' of the problematisations and tensions within the critical allows us to direct attention towards the value of explicating the specifics of the handling of the object of critique, which at the immediate level of a unit of analysis, are not necessarily commensurable with those that can be grouped in other ways, including through reference to their, as much as our own shadows and bright spots (Reid & Scott, 2013). As Bacchi (2016, p. 12) own work concludes:

> In this view, contra Bambra et al. (2011, p. 405), who suggest that researchers focus "less on describing the problem and more on ways to solve it," researchers are called upon to contest the current emphasis on "problem-solving," and to subject their own problematizations to the kind of critical scrutiny a WPR analysis recommends. The task becomes considering the extent to which recommended policy proposals, including one's own proposals, either reproduce or disrupt modes of governing that install forms of marginalization and domination.

Coda—in medias res | adrift on Neurath's boat?

We are like sailors who on the open sea must reconstruct their ship but are never able to start afresh from the bottom. Where a beam is taken away a new one must at once be put there, and for this the rest of the ship is used as support. In this way, by using the old beams and driftwood the ship can be shaped entirely anew, but only by gradual reconstruction (Otto Neurath, 1921).

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

Funding

This work was supported by the Aarhus Universitets Forskningsfond [AUFF-2011-734-065].

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