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Deportigualízate: developing a critical intersectional feminist curriculum for physical education

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ABSTRACT

Physical education literature has primarily focused on how critical and feminist pedagogies are enacted in different settings. At the same time, there has been very little literature documenting the process of developing critical and feminist pedagogies in physical education. In this paper, we present two things. In this paper, we present two main things. First, the developmental process of a critical intersectional feminist unit called the *deportigualízate* curriculum. Second, a synthesis of what we have learned after such a developmental process, which is presented as the four organising principles of a critical intersectional feminist approach to physical education. To do so, we outline four distinct phases of this process (1) Learning about people, context and content; (2) Working with co-developers; (3) Initial Pilot; and (4) Practice of the Curriculum. Whilst outlining these phases we also provide a reflective narrative that unpacks the emotions, tensions, contradictions, and challenges we encountered during this curriculum development process. We then reflect on previously published research about the *deportigualízate* curriculum to present its four organising principles, which are the outcome of the development process. We conclude the paper by providing the main insights of the curriculum development process and reflect on ways to support others in developing their own critical and feminist instructional units.

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Introduction

While much is known in the research literature about the enactment of critical pedagogies (e.g. Azzarito et al., 2017; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013), far less has explored the process of curriculum development for critical pedagogies. Making the curriculum development process transparent is important because the ways that teachers teach, and how they prepare to teach, are informed by their values and philosophies of physical education (Ennis, 1992). In other words, the curriculum development process is political because values and philosophies structure the activities that are enacted in schools (Sicilia Camacho & Fernández-Balboa, 2006).

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The purpose of this paper is twofold. First, to 'pull back the curtain' on the curriculum development process by providing *one particular* example of how someone might develop a critical intersectional feminist curriculum in physical education. Second, to present the four organising principles of this critical intersectional feminist approach to physical education, which are the outcome of such a process of curriculum development. In so doing, we do not offer a traditionally structured research paper that outlines a research design, methods and findings. Instead, we provide a reflective account of how we developed the *deportigualízate* curriculum that addresses gender inequities in sport and education. We begin by discussing the broader literature on critical intersectional feminist approaches in physical education. We then outline and explain the four curriculum development phases that led to the creation of the *deportigualízate* curriculum. After each phase, we reflect on the emotions, tensions, contradictions, and challenges experienced by the curriculum developer (first author) as part of the process. We then propose four organising principles that reflect what we have learned from developing, empirically documenting and analysing the *deportigualízate* curriculum. Finally, we conclude the paper by discussing how this might help other professionals who are interested in developing critical and feminist curriculum units in physical education.

Critical, intersectional and feminist approaches to physical education

Physical educators across the world have enacted different forms of critical pedagogies to address different forms of inequities (e.g. gender, race, sexuality). For example, the Activist Approach (Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013) was originally developed using feminist inquiry-based approaches in the United States (USA) (Oliver & Kirk, 2015). In Aotearoa New Zealand, Fitzpatrick (2013) documented a teacher's critical intersectional feminist approach in an urban secondary school working with diverse young people. More recently, Spanish scholars have enacted queer pedagogies in tertiary settings (Devís-Devís et al., 2018; Pereira-García et al., 2021) that required students to reflect on their embodied biographies and how inequities persist in their lives. In other words, several critical pedagogy projects have been undertaken across the world (e.g. Luguetti et al., 2019; Philpot et al., 2021; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2020).

Each of the above critical approaches, although different, share similar visions in that their curricular and teaching practices are designed to facilitate learning about inequities. Fitzpatrick (2019) argued a need for more critical curricular projects to respond to, and be relevant for, the different forms of diversity and unique needs of different contexts across the world. Despite multiple contexts, physical education has a consistent history of reproducing curricular practices that discriminate along lines of gender (e.g. Fisette, 2011), race and ethnicity (e.g. Blackshear & Culp, 2022), gender and sexual diversity (Landi et al., 2023), and other areas related to culture and the body (Kirk, 2020). Some physical education researchers have argued that the field should respond to these inequities by using critical intersectional feminist approaches (e.g. Dewar, 1991; Flintoff et al., 2008).

Critical intersectional feminist teaching approaches merge critical (Freire, 1975; Giroux, 1988) and feminist pedagogies (Dewar, 1991; Luke, 1996) whilst integrating advances made by intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991; hooks, 1994). Indeed, there are multiple forms of feminist and critical pedagogies. Yet, they have some shared characteristics that have included: (a) raising critical consciousness, (b) dialectical learning, (c) love and care, (d) transformation and praxis, and (e) empowerment (Castro-García et al., 2023). The *deportigualízate* curriculum discussed in this paper was an attempt to use these characteristics in the design, development and practice of a unit of instruction. In this paper, we show the process of how we used these characteristics to inform the design, development and practice of the curriculum unit. To do so, we first outline and explain each of the four developmental phases of the *deportigualízate* curriculum. We then show that the way these critical intersectional feminist characteristics were applied to physical education led to us defining four organising principles of critical intersectional feminist pedagogy that are *specific* to physical education pedagogy. In other words, these four organising principles are the outcome of the entire development process, synthesising our learning along with the literature, which could be understood as critical

elements within the pedagogical models literature (Casey & Kirk, 2020). We conclude the paper by suggesting future professionals and researchers in the field may choose to consider using or adapting these organising principles to develop their own curriculum and/or teaching practices.

Developing the *deportigualízate* curriculum: four phases

The *deportigualízate* curriculum was developed as part of a four-year participatory-action research project (see Figure 1). The development was divided into four phases: (1) Learning about people, context and content; (2) Working with co-developers; (3) Initial pilot; and (4) Practice of curriculum. Each phase included a distinct study that involved multiple participants (791 in total). Across all four research projects, data were generated using multiple methods that included, but were not limited to, questionnaires, reflective field notes, artefacts, and group interviews. These data were analysed using multiple methods that included but were not limited to statistical analysis, narrative analysis, descriptive coding and concept coding. The figure below provides an overview of this process but for a detailed understanding we wish to refer the readers to the published findings for each of these stages (Castro-García & López-Villar, 2021, 2022, 2025; Castro-García, Barquero-Ruiz, & López-Villar, 2025; Castro-García, Landi, & Kirk, 2023).

This paper departs from the previous papers because it takes an overarching view of the curriculum development process. As such, rather than discussing each study by itself, this paper presents the overall findings of the project. We organised this section by discussing the four stages of curriculum development for the *deportigualízate* curriculum. For each phase, we briefly describe the setting and participants, the methods and relevant findings. We also chose to add personal reflections using data from a reflective diary. This helped us to better explain the rationale behind the

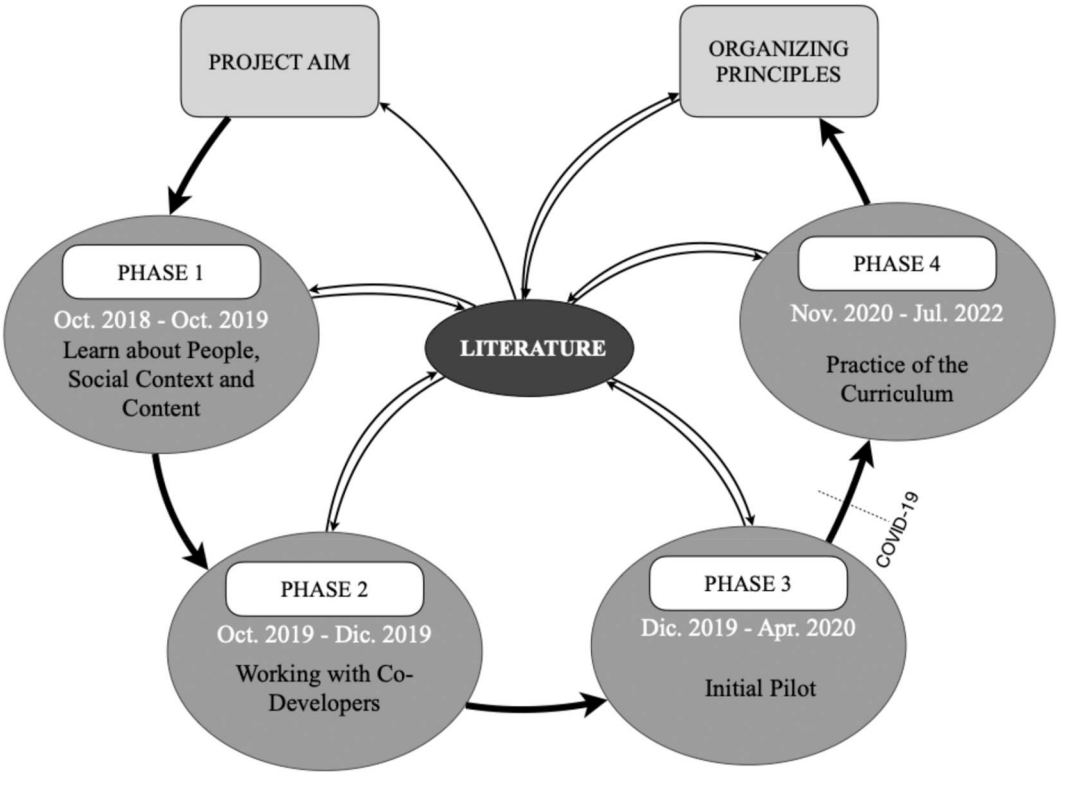

Figure 1. Diagram of the project process.

decisions that were made. These personal reflections also illustrate how personal, social and institutional factors influenced the curriculum development process. As a result, we provide an overview of the entire development process.

Phase 1: learn about people, context and content

In October 2018, the curriculum development started when we (Cristina and Marina) met to plan my[1] PhD research project. The first step was to undertake a two-fold investigation to: (a) better understand gender issues relevant for Spanish physical education students and teachers; (b) become familiar with content knowledge in physical education and feminist critical intersectional pedagogies. To learn about the context of Spanish physical education, we conducted an initial survey exploring attitudes and beliefs about gender. We also developed a literature review on gender-based curriculum interventions in physical education. The results of these two steps (initial survey and literature review) would help inform an initial draft unit plan to address gender equity in physical education.

Initial survey: attitudes, beliefs and gender issues in physical education

The first step in our curriculum development was to know our students and context that we would be teaching. To do so, we (Cristina and Marina) used two questionnaires with secondary Spanish physical education teachers and students measuring their attitudes and exploring their beliefs about gender in sport and education. In 2018-2019, we surveyed 90 physical education teachers and 644 students in Spain (Castro-García et al., 2025) and this led to several relevant findings for our curriculum development.

One of the major findings from this study was the difference in perception amongst teachers and students about addressing gender. For example, teachers believed they displayed gender-sensitive attitudes but students' felt their teachers treated students unfairly based on gender. More specifically, students believed that teachers demanded more effort from boys than girls. Another relevant finding we identified was that students believed boys are born more athletic than girls. Further, there was a gap in equitable attitudes and beliefs. Teachers and students who self-identified as men/boys were documenting having attitudes and beliefs that positioned women as less capable. Teachers and students who identified as girls/women, on the other hand, felt that women and men should be considered equal. These differences in gendered attitudes (between students and teachers), about overall athleticism (between men and women), as well as overall equity (between men/boys and women/girls) all became critical topics in choosing literature to review as well as developing the overall curriculum and activities.

Literature review: learning content and relevant pedagogy

In response to our survey results, we decided that we needed to explore which content and pedagogies would be relevant to use in our curriculum. This process was important because it provided empirical and theoretical rationales that built on previous research in physical education. We (Cristina and Marina) framed the literature search around 'curriculum interventions' related to gender in physical education. As a result, three approaches influenced the curriculum development: (a) Activist Approach (e.g. Oliver et al., 2009); (b) critical and cooperative pedagogy (e.g. Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018, 2020); and (c) critical queer tango (e.g. Devís-Devís et al., 2018).

The Activist Approach (Oliver et al., 2009) is grounded in feminist and critical theories with the goal of empowering girls to value the physically active life (Oliver & Kirk, 2015). The Activist Approach is underpinned by four critical elements (Oliver & Kirk, 2015): (a) student-centred practices, (b) pedagogies of embodiment, (c) inquiry-based education, and (d) listening to respond over time. In enacting these principles, the goal is to empower girls to co-construct their physical education experiences to identify, name, critique and potentially remove barriers to physical activity. The Activist Approach has been researched in different settings, including school-based physical education (Lamb et al., 2018), physical education teacher education (Luguetti et al., 2019) and after-school

settings (Luguetti et al., 2017). In relation to the *deportigualízate* curriculum development, the Activist Approach inspired me to co-construct the curriculum by involving, listening and responding to students over time. As a result, power relations between curriculum developers, teachers and students were shifted because each group provided input and was part of the planning.

The second approach that influenced the curriculum development was critical and cooperative pedagogy (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2018; 2020). Sánchez-Hernández and colleagues designed a football (soccer) unit plan that integrated cooperative learning and critical pedagogy to facilitate new ways of moving, learning, thinking about and challenging sexism. Their approach included the idea of incorporating 'critical pretexts' (see Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2020) that engaged students in reflecting on gender and provided spaces to interrogate sexism. The critical and cooperative football unit was enacted in a Spanish mixed-sex class. In relation to the development of *deportigualízate*, I learned the importance of, and provided students safe opportunities for, critical reflective discussions. These discussions included the voices of marginalised young people which became important for students to develop empathy by listening to and even trying to understand different persons' perspectives.

The third approach that influenced the curriculum development was using a critical *queer tango* (Devís-Devís et al., 2018; Pereira-García et al., 2021). This approach was important because it was based in a Spanish context and was familiar with dominant cultural norms around masculinities and femininities. In traditional tango, there is a man and woman couple that are expected to perform masculine and feminine dancing roles. These researchers *queered* the gender and sexual norms by asking women to perform masculine roles, asking men to perform feminine roles, or by asking two persons of the same gender to dance with each other. As a result, the students' bodies were *queering* (disrupting) dominant gender and sexual norms embedded in Spanish society.

After performing their *queer tango*, the students were prompted to reflect on their experiences including their thoughts, bodily feelings and emotions. As a result, many students started to understand gender as *embodied*. These researchers informed the curriculum development because they inspired us to 'play with' or 'perform' different identities. As a result, the body was understood as a site of learning that included bodily sensations, feelings, and emotions. Thus, embodiment and 'queering' identity were included in the development of the *deportigualízate* curriculum.

Unit plan draft 1 (Initial plan)

Using the insights gathered from the survey and literature review, I designed an 'ideal' curriculum to address gender. This included specific gendered content from the surveys (e.g. gender stereotypes, gender expectations, body ideology) as well as the insights from the three approaches above (Activist Approach, critical and cooperative learning, queer tango). The initial plan comprised 14 lessons that included activities made for in-class and out-of-class (hooks, 2003). I designed the activities to place students at the centre of instruction and to co-construct knowledge. These activities included prompting students to create an inclusive playground, developing a workshop addressing social inequity, and creating a role model programme. Further, I created an Instagram account to be run for and by students. This initial plan (Unit Plan Draft 1) was created in October 2019 (Table 1).

Reflections on phase 1

Although phase 1 has been presented as linear, it was not. This phase was complex and full of 'peaks and valleys.' Firstly, I felt lost without having a 'how-to' guide in order to develop the 'perfect' curriculum. Perhaps this is one of the motivations for writing this paper – to provide an example of my process for others. Further, the *type* of work (critical) I was doing in my context (highly masculine and sport-driven) was hard. The department I was in has a history of privileging post-positivist and behavioural research (e.g. physiology, motor control). Not only was feminist research undervalued but it was not considered 'real research' and even 'rebellious.' In other words, doing critical work comes with political and social consequences in our field.

Table 1. Unit Plan Draft 1.

	IN CLASS		OUTSIDE CLASS	
	OBJECTIVE	NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	OBJECTIVE	ACTIVITIES
DAY 1	Create an atmosphere of trust and group cohesion	Sense dance	Be an agent change.	1. Management of an Instagram profile by students.
DAY 2	Feel and reflect on gender inequities	In my own skin		2. Co-creation of inclusive and sexist-free playgrounds.
DAY 3	Reflect on what it means to be a man, and what it means to be a woman.	Redefining what's defined		3. Co-design of workshops, inviting people or athletes of their interest.
DAY 4	Identify and reflect on gender stereotypes related to what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman.	(Pre-)conceptions and (self-)conceptions		4. Co-organisation of workshop or activities ran by students (e.g, giving talks to people from their community).
DAY 5	Identify and reflect on gender stereotypes related to what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman.	In another's shoes		
DAY 6	Analyse preconceptions about bodies and sports	Who is who?		
DAY 7	Analyse the mass media.	What they want us to believe		
DAY 8	Foster a critical reflection and entrepreneurship in relation to mass media	We are the future of journalism		
DAY 9	Think about the power of gender stereotypes related to gender and sports.	Boys also do gymnastics		
DAY 10	Deconstruct myths and stereotypes related to bodies in sports.	What do I believe? And … WHY?		
DAY 11	Deconstruct myths and stereotypes related to bodies in sports.	Dismantling the system		
DAY 12	Experience different corporal identities through physical activities	Let's move it, move it		
DAY 13	Experience different corporal identities through physical activities	Let's move it, move it		
DAY 14	Become aware, if their physical-sports environment is conditioned by gender stereotypes.	With violet glasses		

Yet, there are positives and negatives to being in this department. The initial study exploring attitudes and beliefs was developed using a post-positivist paradigm. We (Cristina and Marina) did this because there was a fear that the thesis would not be considered 'scientific enough' for the internal committee. While this may not have been an ideal way to collect this data, the results we found did have an overall positive influence on the curriculum. In addition, a lot of research in our field focuses on 'what is wrong' with gender in sports and physical education. There was much less on what can be done, or *how* to contest gender inequities in physical education. Therefore, I was trying new things but did not know if I was 'doing it right.' This uncertainty led to me question myself and this shook my confidence. What I am saying is that the process was emotional, arduous, and looking back, rewarding. This initial phase took persistence because doing this type of work is lonely, undervalued and requires passion.

Phase 2: working with co-Developers

Having developed Unit Plan Draft 1, we (Cristina and Marina) wanted to put into practice democratic and feminist theories during the curriculum development. We identified and worked with different groups of 'Co-Developers' that would be affected by and/or could contribute to *deportigualízate*. These groups of 'Co-Developers' that helped us construct the curriculum were: (a) young people; (b) Physical Education-Sport Tertiary Education (PESTE) students, youth sport professionals, doctoral students; (c) gender equity experts; and (d) physical educators.

Listening and responding to co-Developer groups

The first step of Phase 2 was to give the Draft 1 Unit Plan to groups of co-developers for feedback. The first group was ten young people (aged 12-18). In our discussions, the most important aspect they expressed was having practical sessions where they could 'do more than just listen to an old person trying to be cool.' Young people wanted to be part of the educational process where they could express themselves. They strongly requested content that was related to *their* experiences and interests. They said running an Instagram page was too demanding because they already had multiple demands in their lives. They did state, however, that I should use Instagram to share content and communicate with students. Based on feedback, some activities seemed appropriate, and others did not (e.g. mini-research on certain topics). They found some topics too boring or too far removed from their interests, such as building inclusive playgrounds. Based on their feedback, we (Cristina and Marina) made changes to the Unit Plan and gave the revision to the next group of co-developers.

The next 'Co-Developer' group was comprised of four PESTE students, two youth sports professionals and two physical education doctoral students. This group said the curriculum was not realistic. They stated that 14 lessons for a single unit is too much, and some lessons were too ambitious given the constraints placed on teachers. For example, they stated designing workshops is too big of a workload for a teacher. Another critique was the curriculum lacked a 'logical flow' in content and ideas. In other words, the topics were scattered without connections or a cohesive end goal. At the same time, this group thought the activities were interesting. Their feedback was a 'reality check' that forced us to think about the constraints of schools and the importance of coherence. Based on their suggestions, we (Cristina and Marina) eliminated some lessons and some out-of-class activities. This resulted in the total number of lessons to 10. Further, the lessons were organised into four areas: (a) inequities in society, (b) gender & social identities, (c) sport, gender & social identities, and (d) transforming sport.

The revised version of the plan (after students' and young professionals' feedback) was given to the next group of Co-Developers: two gender equity experts. They stated the activities were interesting and were linked to feminist theories. They also said the student-centred nature of the activities de-stabilised power dynamics between teachers and students. Yet, they pointed out that *all* the activities were group-based, and there was a lack of personal reflection. Individual reflections are relevant to the theoretical underpinnings of the curriculum as well as 'quality pedagogy.' Based on feedback, we made a fourth revision to the Unit Plan Draft that included personal reflections as well as opportunities for students to create their own equity initiatives.

The last group of co-developers were two physical education teachers. I provided them the revised Unit Plan Draft and had a follow-up discussion. They said the curriculum was novel and found it relevant to sports and physical education. Yet, they also stated that the activities did not include enough movement and, therefore, did not qualify as 'physical education' but rather was interdisciplinary. The most important point they made was stating that 10 lessons was too long because there is too much content to cover in a year, and this had to align with the school policy. These final points were taken into consideration and led to a second full revision: Unit Plan Draft 2.

Unit plan draft 2

After multiple revisions of the draft, we finalised Unit Plan Draft 2 (Table 2) in December 2019 after three months of consultation. Based on their input, the curriculum was shortened to six lessons, the only realistic number that could work in the schools that signed up for the pilot. The lessons were combined with a workbook for students to complete outside of class. The workbook was important because it allowed us to include more content outside-of-class that was eliminated from the reduction of lessons.

Table 2. Alteration 1 of deportigualízate.

	MAIN THEME	OBJECTIVE	NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	
			Classroom	Workbook
DAY 1	Inequities in society	Identify inequalities within different systems of privilege that are associated with social stereotypes and the problems they raise in achieving equity	Privileged walk	Let's reflect on gender equity
DAY 2	Social Agents: Gender & Social Identities	Become aware of how the socialisation we receive is affected by gender and other social stereotypes and how these can augment and limit young people	#likeagirl	How are we and why?
DAY 3	Social Agents: Gender & Social Identities	Engage with situations and reflect on how different socialisation agents (school, family, sports system, media) aid in the social construction of different gendered identities.	I examine the reality	–
DAY 4	Sport, Gender & Social Identities	Analyse the role of sport in the creation and maintenance of stereotypes about the body and sexism in our society	Who is who?	Bodies, shapes, identities, sports … What do you see?
DAY 5	Sport, Gender & Social Identities	Develop attitudes and skills to detect sexism and normalised gender-based violence in order to deal with it in a positive way.	Boys also practice gymnastics	What they want us to believe
DAY 6	Transforming sport (& society)	Propose initiatives that make it possible to promote changes to sport and education to be inclusive of diverse genders and social identities.	We are the change	We enact the change

Reflections on phase 2

This was the most challenging and emotionally difficult phase. Unit Plan Draft 1 was produced after investing massive time into learning about people, contexts, reading many manuscripts, wrestling with literature and creating a curriculum that *I* believed was ideal for young people. It is painstaking being criticised after so much effort, having to delete entire chunks of work that took months to develop, and ultimately losing *a lot* of what we (Cristina and Marina) created. The most painful experience was the 'reality check' that what I considered to be a quality unit plan was not possible in schools. It is painful (and frustrating) to be passionate about a topic and be told that it can only be afforded six lessons, less than half the original material. Yet not all the experiences were painful. There were moments of encouragement. For example, I was happy (and a bit relieved) that equity experts felt the activities were aligned with feminist theories and seemed engaging. There were ups and downs but also this curriculum was continuously developed, updated and re-developed. I was forced to be pragmatic and this led to a range of feelings from excitement and inspiration all the way to disappointment and pain. At the end of this phase, all these feelings transformed into a positive energy that flowed into the initial pilot of *deportigualízate*.

Phase 3: initial pilot in secondary setting

The third phase of the curriculum development was to pilot the curriculum. We (Cristina and Marina) used our professional networks to collaborate with teachers and gain access to a secondary school to teach *deportigualízate* in January and February 2020. Only one teacher agreed to collaborate, so the choice of school was a matter of convenience. The overall phase, including teaching, generating and analysing data, lasted four months. The curriculum was enacted in a Spanish public secondary school, with the students enrolled in an 'Ethical Values' class. The 'Ethical Values' class was chosen by the teacher because he was concerned about a lack of physical activity in physical education. The aim of this class is for students to develop critical thinking and foster an appreciation for values that support democratic, equitable and diverse coexistence. The class was comprised of three self-identified girls and eight self-identified boys. The group was diverse in terms of ethnicity, country of origin, social class and physical activity backgrounds.

Examples of the practice

Here, we explain a couple of activities practised with the secondary students. Following this, we reflect on how we (Cristina and Marina) chose to keep or remove activities from the curriculum. The first activity we reflect on is 'Who is who?' This activity was meant to provide students with opportunities to reflect on gender stereotypes about sporting bodies. For a full example of the activity, we refer readers to work published elsewhere (Castro-García et al., 2023). In short, the activity presented action pictures of different athletes with their faces and other identifying features covered whilst performing a sport. The students were asked to 'guess' the gender of the athlete based solely on specific body parts displayed (e.g. leg in synchronised swimming, arm in canoeing). Most students chose the wrong gender in most pictures. All students were shocked by the activity, and it sparked debate around gender equity, bodies and sport, as well as raised a critical consciousness among the group.

Our perspective of the 'Who is Who?' activity shifted after being put into practice in the classroom. The activity was first developed as a 'starter activity' or 'quick game' to get students to think about gender, bodies and sport. After teaching the activity, it became a central part of the curriculum for two reasons. One, it took much longer than anticipated because the discussion was filled with questions, assumptions and critical thinking. Therefore, it could not just be a 'starter activity.' Second, not only did the activity instigate inquiry, but the students were emotionally invested in participating. Here, the activity went from a 'warm up' to an embodied critical experience that 'moved' students to consider how bodily knowledge comes together with cultural stereotypes to produce gender inequities. Thus, we shifted this activity to be a main part of a lesson.

Other activities also had to be modified. For example, the activity 'What they want us to believe' was meant to promote critical thinking around socialising agents (e.g. media) and their role in (re-)producing gender inequities. In this activity, students located a form of media (e.g. newspaper, magazine) related to sport in Spain. They were asked to measure the space allocated in the document for each sport (e.g. women's basketball, men's football), how the athletes were portrayed in the pictures, and which sports were associated with which genders. After the activity, I felt this was too simple for students. Therefore, we (Cristina and Marina) chose to modify the unit plan moving forward. To do so, the activity was moved to the workbook, so students did the analysis before class. Students would also meet in small groups out-of-class to discuss their individual findings. Then, as a group, the students were expected to develop and deliver a presentation with 'key takeaways' from their combined analysis and present those findings in class using any delivery method (e.g. poster, slides). Therefore, this activity was transformed from a single in-class analysis to a group presentation based on conversations and individual analyses.

Not all activities, however, made the cut for the revision. This was due to several reasons, but the main constraint was time. Because the activities were cut, the workbook also had to change to reflect classroom content. The purpose of the workbook was to facilitate individual reflections and expand on class instruction. The workbook stated the objectives of each lesson and linked them to the curriculum's overarching purpose. For context, grading is conducted often in Spanish schools. This workbook, on the other hand, was *not* graded because we wanted to encourage students to do personal reflections without judgment about being 'right' or 'wrong'. The updated workbook was 13 pages with the following types of activities: (a) think and reflect; (b) write down; (c) research and inquiry; (d) informal quiz; and (e) group activity.

Draft after first piloting of deportigualízate

After all these modifications were made, the Phase 3 Draft Curriculum (Table 3) took the following shape:

Table 3. Alteration 2 of deportigualízate.

	MAIN THEME	OBJECTIVE	NAME OF THE ACTIVITY	
			Classroom	Workbook
DAY 1	Inequities in society	Identify inequalities within different systems of privilege that are associated with social stereotypes and the problems they raise in achieving equity	Privileged walk	Let's reflect on gender equity (*p*. 1)
DAY 2	Social Agents: Gender & Social Identities	Become aware of how the socialisation we receive is affected by gender and other social stereotypes and how these can augment and limit young people	#likeagirl	How are we and why? (*p*. 2-5)
DAY 3	Social Agents: Gender & Social Identities	Engage with situations and reflect on how different socialisation agents (school, family, sports system, media) aid in the social construction of different gendered identities.	I examine the reality	What they want us to believe (*p*. 6-9)
DAY 4	Sport, Gender & Social Identities	Analyse the role of sport in the creation and maintenance of stereotypes about the body and sexism in our society	Who is who?	Bodies, shapes, identities, sports … What do you see? (*p*. 10-11)
DAY 5	Transforming sport (& society)	Propose initiatives that make it possible to promote changes to sport and education to be inclusive of diverse genders and social identities.	We are the change	We think on the change (*p*. 12)
DAY 6			We are the change	Let's reflect on gender equity, again (*p*. 13)

Reflections on phase 3

After many months, 'the moment of truth' arrived, and we (Marina and Cristina) could see all the effort had been worthwhile. Piloting the curriculum came with great excitement. Yet, it came with suspicion because critical thinking is not the same as *teaching* critically. For me, teaching critically involved questioning societal norms, power structures and existing assumptions that could potentially lead to controversial moments. Despite their initial hesitation, the students enthusiastically engaged in the activities, and this fostered a dynamic atmosphere for discussions and critical inquiry. The pilot reaffirmed the significance of the work and underscored its relevance to the students, who clamoured for more content and lessons. The initial feedback we received from teachers was confusing and frustrating because we had to shorten the curriculum several times before piloting. The shortened time with students, however, is what led to the workbook being crucial in order to cover content we did not have enough time for in class. Uncertainty was the 'leitmotif' of the pilot. Although there was a plan, I had to be ready, flexible and creative to adapt every lesson. It was challenging but exciting!

Phase 4: practice with PESTE Students

The initial plan was to refine the Phase 3 Curriculum through discussions from a research visit with David and other colleagues at the University of Strathclyde. Unfortunately, a global pandemic halted those plans because travel was banned and access to schools was restricted. In response, we (Cristina and Marina) decided to put in practice the *deportigualízate* curriculum with PESTE students in November and December 2020. The overall phase included adapting and teaching the curriculum, generating and analysing data. This process lasted nearly two years. The pilot took place at a Spanish public university in a Department of Physical Education and Sport. The Department is predominantly made up of men (~80%) from Spain. The practice of *deportigualízate* was done in an elective class named 'Women and Sport.' The students were comprised of 11 self-identified women and 13 self-identified men. The students were diverse in terms of social class, sexual orientation, body types and physical activity backgrounds. All students were enrolled a physical education and sports degree.

Adaptations

The Curriculum Plan had to be adapted for three reasons: (a) the students' age and content rigour; (b) COVID-19 regulations; (c) the university instructor's requirements. In addition to these changes, I

decided to add a 'feedback loop' for the PESTE students to provide advice on what they would benefit from in the next lesson. I read this feedback from the students after each lesson and incorporated some of their suggestions for the next lesson. Each lesson was individually tailored to address students' feedback.

In relation to the difference in age and content rigour, two major changes were made to the curriculum. First the workbook language was changed to reflect academic terminology as well as make it age appropriate. Second, the activities required higher levels of critical thinking. For example, rather than just identifying inequities, students were prompted to critically consider how, why, where and for whom these inequities unfold. The goal was to raise awareness about the ways inequities are reproduced and how they (students) are (or are not) agents that are part of this process.

Due to COVID-19, all activities had to be adapted to meet government regulations. For example, the activity '#likeagirl' originally required *all* students to perform different gendered movements through prompts (e.g. 'Throw like a girl' or 'Throw like a boy'). The goal was to de-construct body movements as 'gendered.' The COVID-19 regulations, however, forced us to change the activity. Instead, I sat in front of the class in a traditional feminine posture (e.g. legs crossed, back straight) whilst wearing a mini skirt. I then asked a male student to sit next to me on the table. He sat in a traditional masculine posture (e.g. legs open, taking space, hunched over). I copied his posture whilst wearing a mini skirt. I then asked him to sit like I had previously. This adaptation initially was met with laughter, but what followed was a conversation about gendered body movements and expectations. Here, I still addressed the topic but had to do it differently than the original plan.

The class instructor also placed limitations on class time which affected the structure of the *deportigualízate* curriculum. Instead of six sessions (50 min each) (Phase 3 Draft), I was allocated four sessions (90 min each). A 'final' curriculum was developed to meet the schedule (see Table 4). It is important to keep in mind that the curriculum is always flexible with content because students' feedback informed the next lesson. This helped to improve the activities for future practice but also to make the following lesson more relevant to students' personal experiences. Therefore, I connected the content of *deportigualízate* with students' interests and insights.

Analysis of the practice

The practice of *deportigualízate* with PESTE students generated data over a period of five months that included but was not limited to classroom artefacts, interviews, evaluations, field notes, and others. These data were then analysed (along with data from the pilot, phase 3) over 15-month period using multiple analysis methods. The analysis began during a research visit I undertook at

Table 4. Alteration 3 of *deportigualízate*.

DAY	TOPIC	OBJECTIVES	ACTIVITIES	
			Classroom	Workbook
1	Inequities in Society	Identify the inequalities of the different systems of privilege, associated with social stereotypes and the problems they entail to achieve equity.	Privilege walk	Let's reflect on gender equity
2	Social Agents: Gender & Social Identities	Become aware of how the socialisation we receive is affected by gender and other social stereotypes and how these can augment and limit young people.	#likeagirl	How are we and why?
		Engage with situations and reflect on how different socialisation agents (school, family, sports system, media) aid in the social construction of different gendered identities.	I examine the reality	What they want us to believe
3	Sport, Gender & Social Identities	Analyse the role of sport in the creation and maintenance of stereotypes about the body and sexist situations in our society.	Who is who?	What do you see?
4	Transforming Sport	Propose initiatives that make it possible to promote changes to sport and education to be inclusive of diverse genders and social identities.	We are the change	We enact the change

the University of Strathclyde with David and Dillon from April to June 2021, and further developed through follow-up online meetings and more research visits. For a full explanation of the methods, we refer readers to papers published elsewhere (Castro-García & López-Villar, 2022, 2025; Castro-García et al., 2023). In this paper, it is relevant to highlight that we (Marina and Dillon) analysed the data using critical incident techniques, narrative analysis, conceptual mapping and deductive analyses. Whilst Marina and Dillon drove the data analysis process, David played an active role in contextualising the results and findings with previous literature. This analysis was iterative that required multiple methods, discussions and re-iterations.

Reflections on phase 4

This was the most rewarding phase. I knew there was potential in the *deportigualízate* curriculum after the first pilot. During and after the practice of the lessons in the PESTE setting, however, I felt more confidence and was able to *see* the impact of the *deportigualízate* curriculum. Yet, there were struggles. While I felt confident in the curriculum, I had to navigate my role as a young, cis-woman educator in an environment with students who were mostly self-identified as men and in an age range of a few years younger to some that were older. This was *challenging*. My goal of trying to de-construct power relations, as an example, was difficult because I also needed to create and sustain personal boundaries in a professional relationship – especially as a young cis-woman. This was also difficult because it was my role to come up with counter-points, challenge student thinking, and use strategies to re-direct the class. I wanted to be empathetic and show love for my students but could not come off as too personal. Despite these hurdles, *we* (the students and I) created an atmosphere of respect, care and love that promoted and embodied critical consciousness.

deportigualízate acted as a 'paradise' in the middle of a hostile place. It gave students a new voice, created support networks, and led to new imaginations of what physical education could be. Nevertheless, every time I started a lesson, I was anxious and worried about what my colleagues in the Department were thinking or saying. I especially had these emotions when, for instance, my students hung up protest posters in the cafeteria advocating for gender equity. I also felt contradictory emotions that included pride and trepidation, honour and shame. Yet, the students' feedback, Cristina's active support, the research team's help, and David's and Dillon's comments, were all filled with the optimism I needed to believe in the *deportigualízate* curriculum and the importance of this work in physical education. To that end, the next section explains the Four Em's – the organising principles we developed that could inform a Critical Intersectional Feminist approach to physical education.

The four em's: organising principles of critical intersectional feminist physical education

In the above section, we outlined the overarching process used to develop the *deportigualízate* curriculum. In this section, we explain the four organising principles that can inform a critical intersectional feminist approach to physical education. These four organising principles are based on a synthesis of learning from the four phases described above, and as such, are the outcome of developing, empirically documenting and analysing the *deportigualízate* curriculum. We refer to these organising principles as the Four Em's. We believe the Four Em's are concepts *specific to physical education* that help structure pedagogy using a critical intersectional feminist approach, and can be understood as critical elements of a pedagogical model (Casey & Kirk, 2020).

We believe that explaining the principles may help future teaching professionals, curriculum developers, researchers, and others in the field that may be struggling (like I did) to create lessons, curriculum or policies informed by critical intersectional feminist approaches that are *specific to physical education*. Below we outline these Four Em principles: (1) Embodied Transformation, (2) Emplaced Criticality, (3) Empowering Relationships, and (4) Embedded Transformative Praxis.

Principle 1: embodied transformation

deportigualízate reclaims the body's centrality in learning, understanding it as an integral part of transforming inequities (Rich, 1999). For this to happen, pedagogy should emphasise how conceptual ideas are bound up in the emotional and personal experiences in learning (Crabtree, Sapp, & Licona, 2009). This may stir different thoughts and feelings. By integrating subjective, emotional, and corporeal experiences, using *Embodied Transformations* in physical education means fostering a critical approach to knowledge that uses 'jarring pedagogies' that can hit differently in order to move students in ways that are emotional, cognitive *and* physical. Thus, *Embodied Transformations* means recognising that quality teaching in physical education is a holistic endeavour that considers multiple dimensions of the body including the moving body, thinking body, and emotional body (Quennerstedt et al., 2024). As a result, change comes 'from the inside,' underscoring the importance of *embodiment* in mobilising social change and *transformation*.

Principle 2: emplaced criticality

Put simply, place matters. This is especially true in physical education because the subject attempts to socialise young people into different movement cultures (Quennerstedt et al., 2024). What this means is physical education plays a role in raising a 'kinaesthetic consciousness' (Culp, 2020) where students draw on their experiences to develop the critical thinking skills necessary for challenging injustices in the movement cultures they are a part of. In this way, a critical intersectional feminist approach would require students to draw on their lived experiences to employ an *emplaced criticality* that questions taken for granted norms in their cultures. This criticality is essential for instigating social action and requires students to critically reflect on their personal experiences, their personal interests, and their perceived needs. Thus, *Emplaced Criticality* is about analysing 'the self' (Giroux, 1988) in relation to how we are connected to reproducing (or changing) social, cultural and historical structures. In the *deportigualízate* curriculum, this meant students identified and critiqued the different structures that negatively affected their (or other people's) lives by drawing on personal lived experiences. Here, a critical intersectional feminist approach means showing that students may share a similar 'common ground' (e.g. PESTE, sport, schools) but they will have different experiences than people they share that space with.

Principle 3: empowering relationships

A critical intersectional feminist approach in physical education includes developing skills like listening, empathy and love. What is meant by *Empowering Relationships* is the idea that physical education can forge meaningful relationships that produce deeply connected communities (hooks, 2003). To do so, a critical intersectional feminist approach means addressing the social and cultural dimensions of the body in physical education (Quennerstedt et al., 2024). Here, social skills like listening to others, building empathy and cooperation are essential to building communities. Further, learning about different personal and shared values like respect, justice and resilience are just as essential in producing empowering cultures. Thus, power is essential here, but it is not understood as form of domination. Rather, it is the creative force that activates desire, trust and support, as well as innovation amongst each other. *Empowered Relationships* in physical education means using activities that acknowledges, affirms and values differences in identities and culture. This could mean fostering empathy by listening to and sharing personal experiences. As a result, critical intersectional feminist approaches aim to create and sustain empowering learning communities that use social relationships to encourage growth, development and innovation.

Principle 4: embedded transformative praxis

The goal of a critical intersectional feminist approach is to challenge systemic inequities and work towards social justice. As such, a critical intersectional feminist approach in physical education must have *Embedded Transformative Praxis*. According to Freire (1975), praxis is a matter of combining theory and practice in the classroom. Without this integration, critical intersectional feminist pedagogies risk remaining a mere ideal, dream or utopia that have no implications for the cultures that we aim to build (Mayberry & Rees, 2009). Thus, a critical intersectional and feminist approach integrates specific theoretical content that addresses inequity and requires students to apply this knowledge in their lives. Therefore, the thinking is not just an isolated process but is an embodied action (Oliver & Kirk, 2015) where theory and practice are intertwined. Critical intersectional feminist approaches in physical education promote *Embedded Transformative Praxis* by providing students the opportunities to develop their own activities, make adjustment to their own movement cultures, and to critically inquire about solutions that can address inequities in their own lives. In other words, *Embedded Cultural Praxis* means doing activities where students can develop the skills and passion to critically analyse, reflect on and enact changes in their communities to sustain cultural conditions that are more equitable (hooks, 2000).

Conclusions

We started this paper by acknowledging the rich tradition of critical and feminist pedagogy in physical education (e.g. Azzarito et al., 2017; Fitzpatrick, 2013; Oliver & Oesterreich, 2013). We noted that much of this research documented *how* critical pedagogy is enacted, but there was little on the curriculum development process. The purpose of this paper was to detail the process we took developing the *deportigualízate* curriculum using a critical intersectional feminist approach. Our motivation was to help others who, like ourselves, want to *do physical education differently*. We do not believe there is one right way to develop critical intersectional feminist curricula. We maintain this paper merely provides *one* potential way critical intersectional feminist approaches can inform the curriculum development process. As a result, we believe this paper may help future professionals in their own journeys of integrating critical approaches into practice.

One way this paper may provide guidance for future professionals is our explanation of the steps and phases we went through. We started our curriculum development by learning about the people, context, and content that was important. We then took our ideas to 'co-developers' that included students, teachers, experts, and others to provide feedback and make changes to our curriculum. We then 'piloted' the curriculum to work out different issues. Finally, we revised and put into practice the curriculum unit, empirically documented what happened, and analysed the impact of the unit as well as the ways it was conceptually informed. These steps may be useful for future professionals in the field.

Yet, we also believe that the organising principles (the Four Em's), which resulted from a synthesis of our learning along with the literature, can also be helpful in developing a curriculum. Based on our experience, critical intersectional feminist approaches in physical education looks different compared to classrooms. This is because of how *embodied*, *emplaced, empowering* and *embedded* experiences can be in physical education. Thus, we offered these four Em's as principles that can help future professionals when they are creating their own activities, curricula or even policies for physical education. In using these principles, we believe that physical education can be organised in a way to make it liberating – a practice of freedom (hooks, 1994). Yet, we acknowledge that doing this work comes with political consequences (Fernández-Balboa, 2017) and, therefore, needs perseverance, resilience and love. We hope that our paper serves as a source of inspiration that can encourage others to embark on their *own* journeys towards creating physical education experiences that aim to produce more equitable conditions for engagement in movement.

Note

1. When 'me' or 'I' is used, it is referring to the first author, Marina.

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