

## **Global intersections: Political economy, culture, and physical education and sport**

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It is a great honor for me to be chosen to deliver the Jose Cagigal keynote address. I first met Jose Cagigal in 1968 in Washington, D.C. We were both attending the 2nd International Congress of Sports Psychology. He made two presentations during that congress. One was titled "*Social Education Through Sport*" I remember being deeply moved by his sincere humanistic commitment to the role of sport as a means of education for liberation and human development. Our paths didn't cross again but I followed his impressive career through various publications to which I subscribe. It was an extraordinarily productive career. The field of physical education and sport lost one of its greatest leaders of the 20th century with his untimely death. I congratulate AIESEP for keeping his name alive through this keynote lecture.

During the course of this conference, numerous papers will be presented dealing with specific aspects of research and practices within the field of physical education and sport. There are papers about motivation in sport, fitness, research methodology in sport science, student misbehavior in physical education classes, etc. These are all appropriate and useful to teachers and researchers in this field, but physical education and sport are not disconnected from the wider world. Every day in every way,

this wider world impacts and influences our professional and scholarly endeavors. Noted American sociologist C. Wright Mills (1961) described what he called the sociological imagination as an attempt to historically situate our personal experiences while at the same time relating ourselves to the wider world in which we live. In a similar way a physical education imagination necessitates that we engage in a continuing quest to understand the broader historical, political, economic, and cultural realities in which physical education and sport are embedded.

In my career of some 30 years as a physical educator, I have taught at 10 institutions of higher education, either as a regular member of the faculty or as a visiting professor. Through those experiences, I have had many opportunities to observe physical educators at work close up and personal. What I have found is that most of our attention and professional work in physical education does not connect physical activity programs with the larger political, economic, and social milieu and its impact on our personal lives, or the lives of our students. We tend to have little awareness about how sport and other forms of physical activity, as well as our own professional lives, are linked to the social relations which underlie social class inequality, sexism, racism, and other forms of oppression and discrimination. Hierarchical and autocratic organization, so prevalent in physical education and sports organizations, seem not to be problematic to physical educators, nor do the wider social injustices and undemocratic traditions of contemporary society seem relevant. This is the case because our scholarship and professional practices, as well as most of the public discourse about physical education and sport, does not confront us with questions about political and economic power and ideology and their linkages to physical activities and sports.

This is unfortunate because unfamiliarity with the connections between human movement practices and the broader social world prevents us from recognizing how hegemonic political, economic, patriarchal, and particularized cultural interests shape and mold the values of our social world and how our human movement practices may reinforce and reproduce these same values. This has been one of the most persistent obstacles for us as professionals in forming meaningful interpretations about the linkages of our programs to the broader society - to how and why society works as it does, what its effects are, who benefits, who loses, who are left out, who are silenced, and what alternatives might exist.

Really understanding our role as human movement professionals in contemporary society requires that we move beyond perceptions of ourselves as isolated from the broader social order. As long as we confine our vision merely to what's going on in our profession, we will only be dealing with symptoms of much larger configurations. Sports and physical education are practices which are socially constructed, and any adequate account of them must be grounded in an understanding of power, privilege, inequality, oppression, and dominance within society.

Australian educator, Richard Tinning (1993) has noted that, "*we have a responsibility to try to identify the ways in which our professional practice affects, and is affected by, social issues such as violence, sexism, or racism, and that with such identification comes a moral responsibility to attempt to change our practice to ensure it is socially responsible*" (p. 3). The implication for such action is that if we become more active in the construction of our social world, we become active agents rather than merely the objects of socio-historical processes; we, as sociologist Richard Flacks (1988) argues, make our own history by transforming social structures instead of being dominated by them. Again, Tinning argues, "*sport is a very useful vehicle for deflecting national attention away from issues of the state and political processes. . . but [it also has the potential] to challenge the dominant ideologies which underpin violence, poverty, and oppression*" (p. 3).

Following Mills, I take physical education and sport to be rooted within the broader stream of political, economic, and social forces of which they are a part. So in this presentation I'm going to attempt to map out the present world conjuncture, to discern its essential features and trends. I am going to situate political, economic, cultural, and educational issues and connect them with the future of our field so that we might become more active in constructing a better future.

## **1. THE PRESENT WORLD CONJUNCTURE: THE GLOBALIZED SOCIAL ORDER**

The world is presently engaged in the most extraordinary era of transformation since the Industrial Revolution. We are all participants in one

way or another in an unprecedented globalization of the political, economic, and cultural order. A transformation of this extent and scope quite obviously is bound to have a profound impact on the world's educational systems, and thus carry enormous implications for educators. Richard Falk, professor of international law at Princeton University, argues that two very different sorts of globalization are occurring. One he calls "*globalization-from-above*"; the other type of globalization Falk identifies as "*globalization-from-below*" (Falk, 1992, 1993). Other social analysts are now using this classification for the globalized social order.

### **Globalization-From-Above**

Globalization-from-above corresponds to the widely acclaimed New World Order. It is spearheaded by a few hundred giant transnational corporations, many of them bigger than most sovereign nations. For example, Ford Motor Company's "*economy is larger than Saudi Arabia's and Norway's. Philip Morris's annual sales exceed New Zealand's gross domestic product*" (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994, p. 14). The combined assets of the top 300 transnational firms now make up nearly 25 percent of the productive assets in the world ("*A survey of multinationals*" 1993). Overall, transnational corporations control 40 per cent of the world's manufacturing assets. Thus, a few hundred corporations control the workforce, the capital, and the technology that are constructing the new global social order; and they have every intention of shaping and molding educational systems throughout the world to conform to their vision of the social order of the future.

We normally think of corporations as economic entities rather than political, private rather than public, but today's transnationals are positioning themselves to become the world empires of the twenty-first century. This is the case because the balance of power in world politics is shifting from territorially bound governments to corporations that roam the world. America's Secretary of Labor, Robert Reich (1991) has argued that transnationals "*everywhere are becoming global webs with no particular connection to any single nation*" (Reich, 1991, p. 131). Richard O'Brien (1992), in his provocative book *The End of Geography*, argues that global economic and financial integration, supported by information and com-

munication technologies, makes the very notion of place spurious as far as transnational corporations are concerned. This is the case because the control and regulation of the flow of capital is moving away from nation-states and towards organizations created and controlled by the corporations themselves.

The World Trade Organization (WTO), arising out of the Uruguay Round of GATT negotiations, and the North American Free Trade Agreement are prime examples. The major purpose of both is to give more freedom of action to the transnational corporations and further limit the ability of nations to regulate corporate activities. A transnational regime of this sort suits transnational corporations because it constructs and merges a production and trade alliance that serves the interests of transnational corporations, while disenfranchising local and national governments, unions, and other groups which have sought to restrain runaway free market forces.

Thus, globalization-from-above erodes the power of national governments to control their own businesses and other social institutions, such as education. Gay W. Seidman, professor of sociology at the University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and editor of the *South African Labour Bulletin*, notes: "*Increased mobility of capital and new patterns of international investment have eroded nation-states' control over economic growth, reshaping economic linkages in ways we are only just beginning to understand*" (Seidman, 1993, p. 175).

As the influence of government shrinks almost everywhere, transnational "*corporations are occupying public space and exerting a . . . profound influence over the lives of ever larger numbers of people*" (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994, p. 14). Their most ambitious project - deindustrialization of developed countries - is increasingly moving the national economies of their home country away from basic industries and transferring the labor-intensive phases of production to Third World nations (Berberoglu, 1987; Grunwald & Flamm, 1985; Harrison & Bluestone, 1988; Staudohar & Brown, 1987; "*Who owns. . .*", 1994). In the U. S. total domestic employment among the 500 largest industrial companies has fallen for 10 straight years; indeed, their share of the civilian labor force has slipped from 17 percent to less than 10 percent during that time (Reich, 1991).

For corporations, moving plants and operations to Third World countries is a way to boost profits. But for workers and their communities in developed countries the consequences have been grim. Workers faced with plant shutdowns lose much more than wages and benefits. Many lose their homes, their cars, and their savings. Increased rates of suicide, homicide, heart disease, alcoholism, mental illness, domestic violence, and family breakup have been linked to the stress of unemployment when plants are closed and productive operations moved to other countries. Schools deteriorate and educational opportunities are restricted or lost as corporations relocate in foreign countries (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994; Bluestone, 1988; Dudley, 1994; Kamel, 1990; Perrucci, Perrucci, Targ, & Targ, 1988; Staudohar & Brown, 1987).

For workers in the Third World, there is overwhelming evidence that globalization-from-above via transnational investment in those countries carries with it some heavy burdens. Corporations are able to exploit the labor and resources of Third World countries. They are able to pay workers a fraction of what they would have to pay them at home, and they are able to work them longer hours under unsafe and unhealthy conditions; they are able to pollute the water, air, and soil; they are free to dump toxic chemicals, banned pesticides, and drugs that they are prevented from unloading at home (Herman, 1993; Slater, 1991). Attempts to organize labor unions are often violently suppressed by government soldiers. Workplace democracy and worker rights are nonexistent. Finally, the education of children in these countries is ignored as millions of them are coerced into the workplace, and many others are left to the streets because of insufficient schools in the newly urbanized areas where export manufacturing takes place.

While the public discourse throughout the world is on the economic benefits of the globalized social order, in reality, the world is faced with a profound global problem: enormous global inequality. While the family income of the wealthiest Americans increased dramatically over the past 15 years, the number of full-time workers in the U. S. who are impoverished has increased by 50 percent; 18 percent of full-time workers now fall below the poverty line (Scheer, 1994; Schwarz & Volgy, 1992; "Who are the prisons for" 1994). Twenty-five percent of all children under age 6 live in poverty ("Study finds" 1994; Shapiro & Greenstein, 1993).

In mid-1993 the unemployment rate of the 12 countries of the European Community was an distressing 10.3 percent (Barnet & Cavanagh, 1994). According to the International Labor Organization some 30 percent of the world's active labor force - 820 million people - are currently unemployed or underemployed, and almost one quarter of the world's population, or 1.2 billion people, live in absolute poverty (Epstein, Graham, & Nembhard, 1993; Peterson, 1994; World Bank, 1990; Worldwatch Institute, 1990). In the past 30 years the per capita income gap between the developed and underdeveloped countries has actually widened (Arrighi, 1991; Worldwatch Institute, 1990: 136-137).

This global inequality has a multitude of forms of misery it generates that are related to poverty (Kloby, 1993; Phillips, 1993). For example, the infant mortality rate, the best summary statistic of overall social development according to UNICEF, also reveals massive global inequality. Nineteen of the major industrial countries of the world have an infant mortality rate of less than 11 per 1,000 live births, while over 60 nations, with a total population of 2 billion, have infant mortality rates over 100 per 1,000 live births (UNICEF 1991). Similar inequalities are found in educational opportunities, literacy rates, life expectancy, access to clean air, safe water, and the like.

### **Globalization-From-Below**

Globalization-from-above advances under the banner of a free-market economic liberalism promising economic prosperity; but it has delivered worldwide impoverishment and an unconscionable gap between the haves and have-nots, and between wealth for the few and lack of opportunities for the many. But globalization-from-above is not an independent force following a predestined path. Individuals, groups, organizations, and even nations have the capacity to oppose, resist, and fight back to shape globalization to match the needs of people throughout the world. In his book *Explorations at the Edge of Time*, Falk combines the concept of globalization-from-below with a model of a postmodern future.<sup>1</sup> In doing this, he argues that modernity has not turned out to be a force of human liberation but instead has become a conservative force limiting human freedom, obstructing progress, and hindering development of a humane basis

for world social order. As a consequence, the political framework of modernity supporting the territoriality of the state and the reliance upon huge private corporations pursuing their own particular interests is in need of a major restructuring.

The postmodern image that animates Falk's (1992) explorations is quite different from the postmodernism that is found in literary and cultural discourses. Falk's postmodernism is "*reconstructionist, optimistic, normative*"; it "*implies the human capacity to transcend the violence, poverty, ecological decay, oppression*" and, injustices of the modern world (p. 6). Falk's model treats current trends advancing in postmodern directions as being formidable political and cultural attempts to transcend "*the obsolescent constraints of modernist conceptions of the feasible*" (Falk, 1992, p. 1). It is a direction that ought to favorably resonate with educators values and aspirations throughout the world.

Globalization-from-below and its accompanying postmodern perspective consists of numerous international social and cultural forces committed to human rights "*and a vision of human community based on the unity of diverse cultures seeking an end to poverty, oppression, humiliation, and collective violence.*" It is an expression grounded in the spirit of "democracy without frontiers," mounting a challenge to the elitist and undemocratic tendencies of globalization-from-above. It is based on a notion of a "*global civil society*" which seeks "*to extend ideas of moral, legal, and environmental accountability to those now acting on behalf of state, market, and media.*" (Brecher, Childs, & Cutler, 1993, p. ix). This approach is both humanistic and cosmopolitan, and it is also a celebration of plurality and the politics of race, gender, and the preservation of diversity (Falk, 1992).

Globalization-from-below combined with a postmodern model, in contrast to globalization-from-above, aspire to establish a voice and empowerment among people in communities throughout the world to develop their lives and environments to meet their needs; "*to enhance the access of ordinary people to the resources they need; to democratize local, national, and transnational political institutions; and to impose pacification on conflicting power centers*" (Brecher, Childs, and Cutler, 1993, p. xv; also see Moody, 1994). Rector of the Central American



University in Managua, Nicaragua, Xabier Gorostiaga (1993), notes that *"international social subjects are sending out calls in different forms, in all parts of the world, through political, religious, union, and NGO [non-governmental organizational] forums and, for the first time, they have begun to link up internationally"* (p. 185).

Democratization at every level from the local to the global is a central goal of globalization-from-below. What presently exists at the global level is not the democratic expression of local and national concerns worldwide, but is instead *"the imposition of a narrow group of interests from a handful of nations on a world scale, [so] democratizing of international interests is essential if genuine democracy is to exist at local and national levels"* (Shiva, 1993, p. 59). Evelina Dagnino (1993), professor of political science at the University of Campinas in Brazil, notes that *"the reestablishment of democratic regimes has been a widespread phenomenon in the past few years, sweeping the so-called Second and Third Worlds"* (p. 239). She adds that social movements are creating an alternative definition of democracy based on an enlargement of the definition of democracy to include social and cultural practices not just the state.

The consequence of this new conception of democracy is that the *"struggle of the urban poor for housing, health, and education, of rural workers for land, of women, homosexuals, and blacks for equal rights, of all groups for environmental protection points in a single direction: the building of a truly worldwide democratic society, and the elimination of inequality in all its different forms. It also implies "the right to be different and the idea that difference shall not constitute a basis for inequality."* This notion of citizenship constitutes *"an elastic system of reference able to encompass different expressions and dimensions of inequality: economic, social, political, and cultural"* (Brecher, Childs, and Cutler, 1993, p. xvii; see also Falk, 1992).

Economic rights are essential to this enlarged vision of democracy. Seidman (1993) describes how the new labor unions that have emerged in newly industrialized countries *"have expressed a vision of democratization that includes, beyond the right to vote, some kind of redistribution of resources and wealth"* (p. 178). For them, democracy means more than just having the right to vote every few years; it includes the principle that

citizens are entitled to a living wage, a decent standard of living, and basic social services such as food, housing, health care, and educational opportunities (Wallerstein, 1994).

One of the most exciting aspects of globalization-from-below is that it represents a convergence of aspirations among people throughout the world. The director of the Mexico-American Border Program of the American Friends Service Committee, Primitivo Rodriguez, states: "*The globalization of capital, production, and communications has created the conditions in which the peoples of the world can come together across borders and barriers*" (p. 298). What is created is the "*opportunity for the convergence of 'world visions,' cultural experiences, and long-held aspirations whose dynamics can lead to a profound re-evaluation or revolution in our ways of thinking of and relating to ourselves and the universe around us*" (p. 298). Today, as never before people in all walks of life, in countries throughout the world, are mapping out ways to empower themselves, to gain control over their destinies.

Peter Bohmer (1992) eloquently articulates the mission of their project. It is a project with a vision of a society that is equal and inclusionary, that respects the dignity of all people, and is environmentally sustainable, that is based on meeting human needs not greed, that is participatory economically and politically. This requires building grass roots movements working towards this evolving vision, participating in social movements and bold organizations which fight the exploitation of working people and against the oppression of women and people of color, and act in solidarity with those struggling for self-determination and social justice (p. 62).

## **2. PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS LEADERS IN THE GLOBALIZED SOCIAL ORDER**

And what about physical education and sports leaders - like all of you here - in the globalized social order? Those who are attempting to map out the future of globalization-from-below and a postmodern future are unanimous in their conviction that educators and intellectuals must play a vanguard role in this movement because, in spite of the many other cultural forces imposing upon the children and youth of today, educators will

still, by the nature of their work, play an influential role in framing reality and shaping and molding attitudes, values, and behaviors of children and youth (Aronowitz & Giroux, 1990; Barber, 1992; Tierney, 1993).

Over 60 years ago American educator George Counts (1932) wrote a book titled *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* His answer was “yes” but the educators of the 20th century have not been up to the challenge of social transformation and have, instead, been largely practitioners of social reproduction. Will the educators of the 21st century be different? There are numerous ways in which physical education and sports leaders can be a part of social transformative movements in the future. But they must first come to an understanding of the consequences of the continuation of globalization-from-above and an understanding of the potential for a turn to globalization-from-below and postmodern images of human development. Once this is done, action can follow. This can begin at a personal level, with a personal inventory about how one’s own actions may be contributing to various forms of inequality and injustice. Where such actions are occurring, a personal commitment to remedying them can be undertaken. One can also analyze the policies and procedures in the organizations of which one is a part. Where discrimination, oppression, and injustices are present, various forms of intervention and agency are possible. Finally, where social institutional inequalities, discrimination, and injustices exist in cultural norms and practices, intervention to change such practices can be undertaken in a variety of ways.

Finally, a major education battle is shaping up between globalization-from-above and globalization-from-below over education. On the one hand there are those who assert that schools are like business organizations and economic goals should drive education, and business models should be utilized to run the schools (Keller, 1983). A globalization-from-below/postmodern view offers a dramatically different paradigm. Its premise is that educational organizations are not business organizations and educators must struggle against them becoming such. Schools are seen as communities and not markets. Human development rather than economic profit are the fundamental concerns. This view stresses connection, caring, and difference; it refuses to subordinate the purpose of education to narrowly defined economic and instrumental concerns. Educational

leadership is geared less to “*management*” and “*control*” and more toward participation; educators function less as “*masters of truth . . . and more as creators of a space where those directly involved can act and speak on their own behalf*” (p. 137, Lather, 1991).

### 3. CONCLUDING COMMENTS

I cannot bring you a detailed plan for what you should do; I cannot offer specific prescriptions. Indeed, it would be a complete renunciation of my own theoretical stance if I did. However, I hope that what I have said today contributes to helping you to understand certain global trends and trajectories, and this that will cause you to think and reflect on their possible consequences, as well as your own potential to make history by intervening in and helping shape the future of your own life, as well as your students’ lives. Perhaps in the next decade or two we will be able to point to exemplary actions among human movement professionals that made a difference toward a better world.

Social analyst Noam Chomsky (1993) noted: “*If you assume that there’s no hope, you guarantee that there will be no hope. If you assume that there . . . are opportunities to change things, there’s a chance you may contribute to making a better world. That’s your choice*”. But “*If we relinquish the belief that we can make a difference, then the forces of [status quo and] greed will have won*” (Braun, 1991, pp. 283-284).

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#### Endnote

1. Hall, Stuart (1991) has used the term "global post-modern".