

The Global Forum for Health and Physical Education Pedagogy: A New Social Movement

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Abstract

Challenges to the health and wellbeing to individuals on a worldwide basis, as a result of increased incidents of non-communicable diseases, has drawn amplified attention. In particular, the increase in obesity and overweight is focusing attention on the importance of physical activity, diet, stress reduction as well as limiting other threats such as use of alcohol and tobacco. The Global Forum for Physical Education Pedagogy (GoFPEP) was initially conceptualized as a global “think tank” organized to rethink reform, reframe physical education pedagogy. Today, we like to think of GoFPEP as a new social movement which seeks change with a focus on improving health and physical education pedagogy and the preparation of teachers of health and physical education. Social movements involve collective action directed at some societal issue or concern and often challenge existing structures, ways of thinking, norms and moral codes. Social movements work to link or network individuals as a result of a common commitment to a new mission that may come about as preexisting social relations, desire for transformation or the need to offer alternative perspectives to the established order.

Key words: social movement, physical education pedagogy, health, Global Forum for Physical Education Pedagogy (GoFPEP)

1 Introduction

The need to improve the health and wellbeing of individuals worldwide has increasingly gained attention of all of civil society. The challenges presented by increased incidents of non-communicable diseases are growing at an alarming rate on a worldwide basis. A clear call to the attention of the world of the need to address this issue was made by the United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon on September 19, 2011. The Secretary General called for an increased focus on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (Ki-moon, 2011). This landmark presentation was only the second time in the history of The United Nations that the Secretary General discussed health related issues to members of the General Assembly. Emphasized in his presentation was the necessity to address the challenges brought about by non-communicable diseases, especially among women and children. Exercise, nutritious diet, improving eating habits, limiting alcohol consumption and stopping smoking were among the strategies emphasized in his presentation. The importance of governments, civic groups, businesses and individuals working together in a holistic fashion as partners linked to various public health initiatives was highlighted.

A review of the literature and recent research studies confirms the fact that obesity and overweight have now reached epidemic proportions worldwide (Hossain, Kavar, & Nahas, 2007; Lobstein, 2011) and the worldwide prevalence of obesity in childhood is also increasing (Wang & Lobstein, 2006). In fact, globally there are now more individuals who are obese and overweight than individuals who are malnourished (Sanders, Baum, Benos, & Legge, 2011). The state of food insecurity in the world (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2006) has reported an estimated 854 million undernourished people worldwide in 2001-2003. However, because of the increasing reliance on imported, processed foods high in fat, sugar, and sodium, 1.5 billion adults, 20 and older, were overweight in 2008 and 65% of the world's population live in countries where overweight and obesity kills more people than underweight (World Health Organization [WHO], 2011).

Children and youth today are particularly vulnerable to challenges of obesity and overweight as they currently represent the single largest cohort group of young people in history. There are 2.2 billion children and 1.5 billion youth in the world today and, of this number, 1.9 billion and 1.3 billion respectively live in developing countries (United Nations Children's Fund, 2005; World Bank, 2007). It is evident that providing children and youth with the opportunity to have a fun and active experience which reinforces their desire to make physical activity a life-long habit may be one of the key elements in addressing the epidemic of obesity and overweight. When school programs are linked with community activities including sports, there is the opportunity to amplify the efforts of both environments in addressing the challenge of obesity and overweight. Further, urban planning policies which are aimed at developing parks and open spaces where people can practice enjoyable physical activities in clean and safe spaces as well as promoting active transportation (e.g. cycling, walking paths, etc.) can be effective community strategies to support the development of a built environment which enhances health and wellbeing (United Nations Office of Sport for Development & Peace, 2008).

At the same time that obesity and overweight has reached epidemic proportions on a worldwide basis, physical education programs are being de-emphasized (Hardman & Marchall, 2000, 2009). Greater emphasis on accountability and high stakes testing has

resulted in a reduction of coursework related to health, physical education, art and music. It is clear that the public and many school administrators have not yet linked the rise of obesity and incidents of overweight to the need for physical education, physical activity and fitness programs. There has been a general decline in the time allocated to teaching physical education in the school and increase in class sizes as well as a general diminishing in the provision of physical education facilities (Dills, Morgan, & Rotthoff, 2011; McKenzie & Lounsbury, 2009).

The Global Forum for Physical Education Pedagogy (GoFPEP) was initially established in 2010 as a global “think tank” organized to rethink reform, reframe physical education pedagogy. There are two central themes to this effort. First, is to discover “best practices” in the teaching of health and physical education; and, the second is to revitalize the way health and physical education teachers are prepared. The initial focus of GoFPEP has included the importance of the application of technology, linkages between the school and the community and the building of partnerships and the establishing of networks. As GoFPEP currently is conceived, it is framed as a new social movement which seeks change.

In response to the increasing concern regarding the health and wellbeing of individuals worldwide, especially issues related to obesity and overweight, the initial GoFPEP 2010 was conceived and implemented as a way of raising awareness and sharing innovative strategies to advance the teaching of health and physical education and developing a network of concerned teachers, professors, allied health professionals, medical professionals, community leaders, business men and women, government officials, publishers and others. The event, held in Grundy Center, Iowa USA in May 2010, invited international voices in a dynamic program designed for educators, health professional administrators, policy makers, business leaders and citizens to discuss the future of health and physical education pedagogy (Edginton, Chin, Gadelmann, & Ahrabi-Fard, 2011). This event drew together 70 invited distinguished delegates from 25 countries, representing 64 universities, institutions, organizations and schools.

The WHO has called upon academics and other agencies to address the issue of obesity and overweight outlining guiding principles for policy development in a report entitled *Population-Based Prevention Strategies for Childhood Obesity* (2009). Two major strategies are suggested and GoFPEP has built its underlying guidelines, assumptions and program strategies to address these areas. The first is that WHO has encouraged the academic community to disseminate information regarding “good practice models.” WHO emphasizes the importance of multi-stakeholders interactions. Second, WHO recommends that global guidelines for action and/or platforms for sharing of evidence and best practice be provided through the provision of global forums. GoFPEP directly addresses both of these elements in framing its programmatic approach.

2 GoFPEP as a Social Movement

GoFPEP has framed itself as a social movement and is envisioned as a way to bring about change to address current challenges faced in the teaching of health and physical education. The movement as a network has been organized to focus on addressing the epidemic of obesity and overweight throughout the world. The mission of GoFPEP is rooted in its strong commitment to improve health and physical education pedagogy, and the preparation of the teachers of health and physical

education as well as instructors and coaches in physical activities, sharing the notion of health enhanced physical activities outside school in other settings of the community where children and youth grow up. The movement has also focused its attention on the application of modern technology support for health and physical education programs into schools and community life.

Social movements often involve some sort of collective or group action directed at some societal issue or concern (Tilly, 2004). As Macionis (2009, p. 487) has noted, “. . . people commonly band together to form a social movement, an organized activity that encourages . . . social change.” “Social movements often challenge institutional structures, ways of life and thinking, norms and moral codes” (Renon, 1994, p. 600). As Blumer (1969, p. 199) has offered in a classical sense, “. . . social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life.”

GoFPEP as a social movement, in fact, is directed at bringing about social change in that they create new ways of thinking, perspectives and solutions to existing problems and concerns in school based physical education and networking with other physical activity settings in community life. Today, social movements are often manifested in the use of social media, technology and, in fact, network people on a global basis to bring about change. As Ibarra (2003) has written, a network of governance for an emerging social movement or critical network can focus on either issues or policies, thus emerging from a social movement can be an issue network or policy network or both. The purpose of the social movement of GoFPEP is aimed to develop into this direction.

According to Gerlach and Hine (1970) an area of concern in order to become a social movement must have several key factors:

- 1) units that are linked personally, structurally or ideologically;
- 2) recruitment by committed individuals using preexisting social relations;
- 3) personal commitment that results from some significant transformation that enables an individual to be identified with a new set of values;
- 4) a mission that codifies values, goals and provides a conceptual framework that serves to guide action; and
- 5) real or perceived opposition from an established order within which the movement has arisen.

From this perspective, GoFPEP is committed to advancing 21st Century health and physical education programs to inspire, motivate and prepare learners to live in an ever-changing globalized society (Edginton et al., 2011). GoFPEP is dedicated to examining new forms of physical education pedagogy which embrace technology, linking practice to theory, contextually-based and embedded in community life and to provide a way to reshape and redesign the future of health and physical education (Edginton et al., 2011). The need worldwide to rethink, reform and reframe health and physical education programs is self-evident as the need for improving the health and wellbeing of individuals is ever present.

More specifically, GoFPEP, as a social movement, is organized built upon and committed to the following guidelines, assumptions and program strategies:

1. GoFPEP is linked to best practice in physical education/physical activity and related areas including health and leisure is emphasized;

2. GoFPEP is framed as an interdisciplinary effort in nature, drawing individuals from multiple disciplines/professional areas as well as a variety of setting including schools, universities, community agencies, businesses, government organizations;
3. GoFPEP networked members include teachers, professors, allied health professionals, medical professionals, community leaders, business men and women, government officials, publishers and others;
4. GoFPEP emphasizes the application of technology and provides a venue for demonstrating its most current and contemporary forms in physical education and health;
5. GoFPEP underscores the importance for the need for a seamless relationship between physical education offered in the schools and community programs;
6. GoFPEP seeks to provide members of its network with opportunities for direct observation and demonstration of model health and physical education programs directly in a school/community setting where there are being implemented;
7. GoFPEP encourages and emphasizes opportunities for dialog and discussion among its network members in order to formulate documents relevant to promoting social policy;
8. GoFPEP seeks to build partnerships and sponsors with schools, community agencies, universities, national and international professional organizations, non-governmental organizations, allied commercial organizations and government agencies; and
9. GoFPEP is committed to identifying and advancing specific outcomes aimed at improving professional practice, influencing social policy and identifying and disseminating relevant information on a worldwide basis.
10. GoFPEP is dedicated to promulgating policies which reveal best practice in health and physical education in conjunction with leading bodies and institutions on local, regional and national levels worldwide.

The activities of GoFPEP have been manifested in the implementation of the first international forum (2010) and the crafting of a consensus statement which has been published in 30 professional journals and translated into 20 different languages. The second forum was organized in May 2012 highlighting the needs and benefits of community based networking to reshape physical education. The Global Journal of Health and Physical Education Pedagogy has been established and the first issue of volume 1 was published in spring 2012. In addition, a book series has been developed with titles focusing on: 1) Health/Physical Education: Contemporary Models of Pedagogy; 2) Model Health/Physical Education Teacher Training Programs; 3) Model Community-Based Programs with Multiple Stakeholders; 4) Health/Physical Education and Model Technological Applications; and 5) Physical Education Practices from Around the World.

3 GoFPEP 2010: Revitalizing Health and Physical Education through Technology

GoFPEP 2010 was focused on the theme of “Revitalizing Health and Physical Education through Technology” and was staged in Grundy Center, Iowa (USA). The program was organized by the University of Northern Iowa and Grundy Center Community Schools. GoFPEP 2010 received endorsements from many state, national and international organizations including the Iowa Association of Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; American Alliance of Health, Physical Education,

Recreation and Dance; the International Council of Sport Sciences and Physical Education; and affiliated organizations such as the World Leisure Organization and sport corporations such as the National Football League.

An important component of GoFPEP 2010 was the sharing of innovative strategies to advance the teaching of health and physical education and the preparation of health and physical education teachers. One of the primary outcomes of GoFPEP 2010 was the development of a “Consensus Statement” (Edginton et al., 2011) focused on teaching health and physical education and the preparation of health and physical education teachers. Each delegate involved in the GoFPEP process was asked to engage in a number pre forum activities required to produce the Consensus Statement. Three basic questions were asked of delegates, including the identification of: 1) innovative strategies in the teaching of health and physical education; 2) innovative approaches in the preparation of health and physical education teachers; and 3) consensus statement recommendations.

The designed process of sharing involved receiving suggestions and recommendations from each of the distinguished invited delegates. In turn, these suggestions and recommendations were formatted into individual poster presentations and were available for group discussion and dialog during the forum. A draft Consensus Statement was drawn from the comments offered in pre-forum activities by delegates and presented at the conclusion of the events formal presentations. This was followed by the organization of discussion groups that included individuals from “different geographic regions of the world, interdisciplinary perspectives (academics, practicing professionals, business leaders, citizens and students) and individuals representing, varying levels of professional practice from teacher/direct service provider through senior administrators” (Edginton et al., 2011, p. 37).

Discussion groups were asked to validate the draft Consensus Statement, offering their additions, deletions or corrections and, in turn, presented to the group as a whole. Following this activity, information was analyzed using the Qualrus qualitative data analysis software package in order to sort responses into coherent themes. Analysis of information provided by the discussion groups emphasized the following themes: 1) health, 2) technology, 3) safe, enjoyable environments, 4) physical education, physical activity and exercise, 5) change, 6) community, 7) overweight and obese children and youth, 8) lifelong healthy active lifestyles, 9) physical education curriculum, and 10) parental involvement. The information gathered from the draft Consensus Statement pre-forum activities, the discussion groups and the qualitative analysis was then utilized to draft the final document (Edginton et al., 2011, p. 39-41).

4 GoFPEP 2012: Revitalizing Health & Physical Education through Community Based Networking

The second Global Forum, GoFPEP 2012, focused on the theme of “Revitalizing Health & Physical Education through Community Based Networking.” The forum was held in Velen, Germany, at the Sportschloss Velen in conjunction with three Primary Model Schools, two based in the community of Velen (HCSC Andreas and HCSC Walburgis School), one based at Winterswijk (HCSC basisschool de Kolibrie), the Netherlands. GoFPEP was organized by Willibald Gebhardt Research Institute, Essen, Germany in cooperation with the departments of sport sciences at the University of Duisburg-Essen and the University of Münster.

GoFPEP 2012 received endorsements from 40 national, continental and global organizations which include leading bodies of sport, sport science and physical education associations from North and South America, Asia and Europe including: Agita Mundo; American Alliance for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance; American College of Sports Medicine; Asian Council of Exercise and Sport Science, European Fair Play Movement; European Non-Governmental Sports Organisation; European Physical Education Teacher Association; European College of Sport Science, European Fair Play Movement, German Association of Sport Science, International Association for Physical Education in Higher Education; International Association of Physical Education and Sport for Girls and Women; International Association of Sport and Leisure Infrastructure Management; International Council of Sport Science and Physical Education; International Federation of Adapted Physical Activity; International Physical Activity Projects; International Society for the Advancement of Kinanthropometry; International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport; the World Leisure Organization and several national Olympic Committees and Olympic Academies.

More than 80 distinguished delegates from more than 50 countries around the world attended GoFPEP 2012 representing their model schools, university departments and different PE and sport related associations. The GoFPEP 2012 program has been arranged to accentuate the theme of the event and organized in several different formats including: 3 keynote presentations; 5 workshops; 3 on-site clinics emphasizing best practice in modern physical education with technology and cross-curricular physical education and nutrition education, including small discussion groups and poster presentation meetings. Papers sent in for discussion group meetings and the poster session focused on three important items: 1) school physical education, sport clubs and other community programs that are linked to enhance frequent physical activities; 2) school physical education which is linked and networked with community partners to support healthy active lifestyles; and 3) innovative strategies in which way the GoFPEP movement can support a healthy school network in local communities.

At the final assembly of the Global Forum recorders of the six discussion groups reported on their group's recommendations how to support networking for schools, sport clubs and communities. A second major item of recommendations were statements whether a common platform for the social movement of the Global Forum should be established: Many delegates expressed their intention to cross the borderlines of the different institutions for more "active networking", "to build a solid platform"; "do more capacity building" and go for a "stronger team building approach" which finally leads to a short but all-in-all statement: "keep the Forum active". Currently, all written material of the General Assembly and later submitted written reports are under investigation by a content analysis to craft a declaration how to progress with the social movement of GoFPEP.

5 GoFPEP 2014: Health and Physical Education: Promoting Best Practice

Plans are well underway for the 3rd Global Forum, GoFPEP 2014, which will be focused on the theme of "Health and Physical Education: Promoting Best Practice." The forum will be hosted by Prof. J. Hans de Ridder, Director, School of Biokinetics, Recreation and Sport Science at North-West University - Potchefstroom Campus, South Africa. As of this date, 85 leading experts from 53 countries/regions have been accepted the extended invitations including individuals representing such countries as

Austria, Australia, Bahrain, Belarus, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Hong Kong-China, Finland, Germany, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Korea, Lithuania, Luxemburg, Macau-China, Malaysia, Mexico, New Zealand, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Singapore, Romania, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Taiwan, Thailand, Turkey, Zimbabwe, Venezuela, UK and the USA. It is anticipated that nearly 100 individuals who will participate in this invitation-only event with many more individuals invited from African countries to insure a strong representation from this part of the world.

The event will take place on the campus of North-West University - Potchefstroom Campus in May 2014. The forum will encourage participants to exchange examples of best practices in health and physical education pedagogy as well as in the preparation of teachers at the elementary and secondary levels in this area. GoFPEP 2014 will address one of WHO's major strategic initiative of revealing and promoting best practice as previously indicated.

6 Conclusion

GoFPEP represents a new social movement aimed at bringing about change in the teaching of health and physical education as well as the training of health and physical education teachers. Social movements involve the collective action of a group of individuals who have formulated a network to bring about change. GoFPEP has created such a network of committed individuals and institutions around the world networking together in a common concern and have directed their attention toward identifying issues and developing and promulgating social policy related to health, physical education and leisure in both the school and community setting.

GoFPEP will challenge current ways of thinking, institutional structures and prevailing health and physical education programs. GoFPEP seeks to engage a broad range of individuals in such a way as to rethink and then reform health and physical education pedagogy. The effort will draw upon teachers, researchers, practicing professionals, business leaders, government officials and citizens to work holistically to frame solutions to existing problems. In addition, GoFPEP seeks to link schools and community agencies to work together to find creative solutions to the challenges presented by increased incidents of obesity and overweight throughout the world.

Social movements can, in fact, be revolutionary in nature. That is, they seek a fundamental change in power or the way in which institutions are organized or structured. GoFPEP seeks to realign ideologically and in practice the way in which health and physical education programs are offered in the schools. GoFPEP especially seeks the application of technology, as well as new curriculum designs, that are student-centered and promote greater accountability. Further, GoFPEP seeks fundamentally to create new arrangements between the schools and the communities within which they operate by building stronger partnerships and viewing the relationships as an integrated and seamless one. Last, GoFPEP seeks to redefine the way in which health and physical education teachers are prepared, accentuating a greater focus on embedding teacher preparation in the schools and reversing the theory to practice paradigm to one that emphasizes practice linked to theory.

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