

OLYMPIC EDUCATION: A TEACHING PROPOSAL FOR PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF SÃO PAULO.

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Abstract

The educational nature of sport was in the foundation of the Olympic Movement since its inception. Understood as a pedagogical tool, sport was seen by Pierre de Coubertin as a possibility of celebration among people, a way to promote peace and development. In this sense, the Olympic Games are considered the public face of this pedagogical effort, and the understanding of Olympic education promotes values and knowledge on the sports universe and all its symbolic acquis. This argument triggers Olympic education programs by countries and cities involved in sport competitions based on the Olympic model. The aim of this study was to present the Olympic Education program developed by the São Paulo Secretary of Education for teachers working in the public school network of São Paulo. This course conducted over the years 2012 and 2013 relied on the participation of 250 teachers, mostly involved with Student Olympics, competition involving public schools of São Paulo.

Keywords: Olympic education; training; Olympism; legacy.

Introduction

The term Olympic Education emerged in the 1970s having as assumptions values and ideas present in the Olympism. One of its goals was to make the modern sport part of the school routine, creating a philosophy of education through sport. The great emphasis on Olympism as a philosophy of life can be found in its close relationship with the broader process of education, exemplified by the Olympic Charter (2003) and its fundamental principles.

Müller [1] provides a description of proposals for Olympic Education that emerged in life and in the production of Pierre de Coubertin as the concept of harmonious development of the human being as a whole; idea of striving for human perfection through high performance (scientific, artistic and sports), sports activity voluntarily related to ethical principles such as fair play and equal opportunities; the concept of peace and goodwill among nations, exemplified as respect and tolerance in the relationships between individuals and the promotion of change for emancipation within and through sport.

The above proposals point to a humanist vision of both the sport and its practitioner, although the sport's rules tend to universalize specific moral values of the society that made the rules of this human activity.

In the construction process of Olympism, Coubertin identified the importance of creating and identifying a sense of agonistic ritual of the Olympic Games. The similarity of sporting events with a heroic and agonistic imagery would boost the inclusion of sports as an educational vehicle and its spread worldwide.

This is one reason for Coubertin to create Olympic symbols and rites, i.e., universal values which are not properly the rules that determine competitive relationships [2]. This is because the symbol has an implicit value in social relations that transcends cultural differences of the various populations involved in Olympic activities.

The aggrandizement of the Olympic Games as well as the major changes that occurred in this great global sports competition led protagonists to be away from the guiding values of the Olympic Movement, hence the valuation of Olympic Education programs in formal and non-formal educational environments.

Kidd [3] sought to articulate points of correspondence between Olympism and the general objectives of Olympic Education, understanding that throughout the 20th century, part of these ideals underwent major transformations, closely followed by movements of society itself. They are: mass participation, which suggests the expansion of opportunities for sport and games to generate what Coubertin called "youth democracy"; sport as education for the development of opportunities that are genuinely educational that would meet both the individual and groups in the process of knowledge; sports in the adoption of a high standard of sportsmanship, generating what Coubertin called "new chivalrous code"; cultural exchange with the integration of visual and performing arts in the Olympic celebrations; tolerance with the creation of a movement whose participation transcends racial, religious, political and economic categories, a sisterhood that promotes understanding and consequently contributes to world peace, and the pursuit of excellence not only in sport performance but in other areas of life.

According to Brownlee [3], "*Olympic education is a process that seeks to bring life to the philosophy of Olympism by teaching Olympic ideals - providing experiences that reinforce cultural and personal identity; tolerance for all, mutual understanding, individual development and search for human excellence*".

For Pierre de Coubertin, the proposed Olympic Education basically involves the concept of human development associated not only physical skills, but also to intellectual and artistic ones. According to the author, the concept of excellence present in the effort in the pursuit for perfection of the motor gesture could also achieve the scientific and artistic spheres. In this sense, the sports activity would be expected to be voluntarily related to ethical principles such as fair play and equal opportunities.

Futada [2] points out that much of the construction of the Olympic ideal and consequently its educational appeal is linked to this symbolic imagery, which throughout the ages has undergone major changes in the unfolding of the Olympic Movement history and the social construction of sport itself.

It is noteworthy that the development of contemporary sport occurred within English schools throughout the 19th century, with the beginning of the process of building a tradition that crossed the 20th century and reached the 21st century transformed into one of the strongest institutions worldwide organized by the International Olympic Committee. Even at the time of great changes occurred over the last century, the Olympic values remain highlighted in both the speech and in the efforts of Olympism organizers.

These are the values of Olympic education programs, athletes' training - that may or may not reach the Olympic Games - or even influence all those who directly or indirectly have engaged or will engage with what should be a great celebration producing symbols and not just a profitable activity for large companies.

Many Olympic education programs have been developed in different parts of the world that host winter or summer Games or, more recently, the Youth Games and highlight the core values for the practice of sport and human development [5] [6] [7] [8] [9] .

Aim and method

The aim of this paper is to present the Olympic Education project implemented with teachers of the São Paulo public school network who follow their students on Student Olympics. The Student Olympics is a competitive sport activity that involves approximately 100 thousand students from schools of São Paulo.

Sixteen meetings, with 8 hours each throughout the years of 2012 and 2013, were held. In 2012, 130 physical education teachers participated and in 2013, 120 teachers participated, of them, 112 were physical education teachers, 2 art education, 2 history, 2 literature, 1 biology and 1 geography teacher.

The city of São Paulo is among the 10 most populous capitals of the planet. The metropolitan area has about 19.5 million people, and the city of São Paulo has a population of about 11 million and 200 thousand inhabitants.

The public school network of São Paulo is the largest system in the country, with nearly 1 million students, representing 8.2% of the 11.3 million inhabitants of the city. These students are spread over 546 schools with approximately 2,300 Physical Education teachers. The Student Olympics of São Paulo includes 100 thousand participants in 14 sports: Athletics, Basketball, Biathlon, Indoor Soccer, Artistic Gymnastics, Rhythmic Gymnastics, Judo, Handball, Swimming, Rugby, Table Tennis, Volleyball and Paralympics (sitting volleyball and athletics).

The selected contents were covered in expository classes, group dynamics and spaces of collective creation. We also discussed specific situations that occur in the daily life of classes and also of Student Olympics competitions and these discussions led to pedagogical proposals for use in classroom in order to discuss and promote the theme values along with students.

Olympic education in school

The basic initial proposal of the Olympic Education Program, São Paulo Secretary of Education, was to lead school teachers to understand the issue Olympic values from the perspective of Olympic Education, enabling students to have access to information on the issue from different perspective [10].

Armour and Dagkas [11] reported that education and educators are involved in the aspirations of Olympic legacies because all cities that have hosted the Olympic Games or even the country that will host the Olympic Games are required to present Olympic education projects. The authors point out that these proposals are not focused only on sports competitions, but all the issues surrounding the Olympic Games and the values involved therein.

Olympic education proposals vary according to the pedagogical model and the cultural environment in which they are developed [12] [13].

In turn, Futada [2] points out that the concept of Olympism present in Olympic Education and its philosophical framework may sometimes seem somewhat distant from the goals traditionally linked to sports practice and its teaching and learning process or distant from the model usually assigned to the educational process that contains objectives, contents, strategies and evaluation. On the other hand, the potential of Olympic Education in using sport as a cultural institution is remarkable, and from all its manifestations, working with various topics in real situations, or a reality closer to learners.

The challenge from the beginning of Student Olympics in the year 2007 both for teachers as for students was to have sports as *an element of integration, socialization and culture of peace, coupled with moral, social and physical development of the student, making the sport initiation of children and adolescents a way to expose children to the various sports* [14]. These precepts approached the preparation for the competition of the Olympic education contents, even before the choice of Rio de Janeiro as the host city for the 2016 Olympic Games.

What is observed in the history of education is the finding that achievement and success of a project require more than good intentions and ordinances. Although many teachers share a utopia, the concrete conditions of the profession and the lack of planning, which incorporate the various levels of the school environment, reveal the inefficiency of actions aimed at improving the quality of education.

Thus, the developments that took place in the training of teachers cannot ignore the demands perceived by the teachers and the specificities of each community served. We still have to consider in this composition the advances provided by educational theories generated in academic environments, the common sense printed by culture and the plasticity of contemporary world, determining temporary positions in educational actors. All this orchestrated by a curriculum that not always is the result of a collective construction.

This scenario gives us the dimension of the difficulty to carry out actions implemented in the school environment, starting with a single action, or contemplating a single instance of this plural structure. It is noteworthy that, despite all these factors, a single project will hardly be able to contemplate all the identified demands, given the dynamics of specificities and impermanence the curriculum components.

Despite the paradigmatic shift initiated in Physical Education in the late 1980s and some consensus in relation to pedagogical principles (inclusion, diversity, complexity, etc), the reality of teaching practice suggests a more thorough discussion on the pedagogical treatment given to the phenomena that make up the body culture of movement.

This need arises from the adoption of different positions in dealing with the knowledge that sometimes reproduces models that do not meet the pedagogical principles governing democratic education, sometimes disregarding the legacy and the possible thematization of these phenomena. Therefore, the proposed intervention of the Education project and Olympic values is aimed at the reflection on the teaching practice from the thematization of these values.

Although the Olympic adjective is added of values that develop with actions related to Olympism, it is important to understand that these are, after all, human values, which lead us to understand that Olympic education programs work basically from values. Therefore, these programs are not tied only and solely to formal education, but in all sports practice environments, whether competitive or not [15] [16].

Futada [2] points to the need to understand the objectives and context of the Brazilian education for the development of Olympic education programs. This is because Physical Education in Brazilian schools has a relatively new scientific knowledge in relation to physical education as an area and in relation to other areas of knowledge present in school. As a result, it creates several theoretical models and teaching practices that can be seen as positive, if the variety of ways to work physical activity and sport is analyzed and understood as part of physical culture adapted to local social needs. In general, one cannot say that physical education or physical activities performed in informal settings, also concerned with the educational development of students, include all objectives set out in the Olympic Education programs and vice versa.

Therefore, the Olympic Education Program developed with teachers from public schools of São Paulo addressed the following topics:

Olympism

The purpose of this topic was to discuss the contemporary Olympic Movement created by Pierre de Freddy, known as Baron of Coubertin. He was an educator, thinker and historian who later learned about the existence of the ancient Olympic Games after the discovery of the ruins of Olympia in Greece. Coubertin believed that sport was an important form of education for the youth and his concern was to spread the concept of fair and healthy competition, health and physical activity. For him, the most important thing was not to win the competition, but to participate in it [1].

After visiting English schools, where modern sport was organized and developed, Pierre de Coubertin visited several countries around the world to know how sport was practiced. After several years, he realized that in different places of the world, even without speaking the same language, people were able to play and compete. Sport was a universal language [17].

So, he decided to search in Greece the idea of reinventing the Olympic Games of the modern era, a form of competition where all countries of the world could participate. The term Olympism refers to the set of pedagogical and philosophical values of the Olympic Movement, and not just the Olympic Games.

History of the Olympic Games in Antiquity and in the Modern Era

At the meeting where this issue was addressed, we started with the references of the Ancient Olympic Games. The similarities between history and mythology were discussed, pointing to the ritualistic and religious character of the Public Games in antiquity.

At this meeting, the origin and function of athletic practices were presented, as well as the structure of education and Greek society for the emergence and performance of competitions, the rise and decay of the Olympic Games [18].

The aim of this meeting was also to discuss the origins of the modern Olympic Games from the context of Western society of the 19th century and the organization and systematization of the sport in Europe [19] [20]. The strategy of linking the development and growth of the Olympic Games in the 20th century with the development of world history and the history of Brazil has allowed a greater understanding of the transformations of the Olympic Games and the trajectory of the career of athletes involved with this event. This perspective is strategic for further discussing the meanings of the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games and the involvement of the Brazilian society in such a major sports event.

The Paralympic Games

The inclusion of the Paralympic Games was aimed not only to understand this phenomenon in particular, but also to promote a broad debate on the inclusion and possible understanding of overcoming and the pursuit of excellence.

For this, the trajectory of the Paralympic Games was presented, the reasons for its creation and the relationships with major issues of society at the time as the reorganization of society in the postwar period. Considered as an activity of physical and social rehabilitation, the Stoke Mandeville Games occurred in the same year of the 1948 London Olympic Games and was characterized as a competition involving veterans of the World War II [21] [22].

The discussions were led to the understanding that the Paralympic Games are an important demonstration of how sport can serve as a means of social inclusion. Many people who have some kind of physical or mental disabilities can, through sport, develop and demonstrate their skills. Therefore, the International Paralympic Committee is focused on the athlete and not on his disability.

Sport and gender

This was a highly mobilizing topic, since female participation in athletic and sporting activities faced great resistance since antiquity. We then used this issue to promote a broad debate on discrimination and prejudice and the construction of social roles in relation to gender. In this sense, the trajectory of women in the construction of the modern Olympic Games and every effort to participate in competitions and resist the power of managers and agents against such participation was presented [23] [24].

This topic also enabled a broad discussion about the inclusion of girls in physical education classes and the consequent possibility of developing motor skills for sports competition. This is because there is an imbalance of girls and boys who participate in Student Olympics, which led to a change in the regulation in order to encourage teachers to be more effective in the inclusion in this population in classes and workouts.

Olympic values

As shown in previous work [23], the Olympic values are directly related to cultural and historical issues. If in principle they were called universal because the representatives of the Olympic movement had a Eurocentric view of the world, in contemporary Olympic movement, it has changed [24]. Currently, considerations related to multiculturalism and gender gained prominence on the agenda of Olympic discussions. On the other hand, a group of seven important values synthesize Olympic education programs around the world, even considering the characteristics of the groups in which they are applied and the pedagogical proposal that underlies the curriculum in a more wide manner [23]. They are:

Friendship: it is the willingness to integrate, to include, for approach even with cultural differences. It involves respect and knowledge, as well as affection and loyalty, even in situations where competition is present. The concept of friendship suggests the integration between people that ultimately would reach one of the Olympic utopias, which is the promotion of peace.

Excellence: it implies the highest degree of quality and perfection. It is the search for the best of oneself and not necessarily to overcome the other. This condition can be extended to many areas of life which would ultimately imply in social transformation.

Respect: it is above all a feeling that takes into account another person. More than obedience, respect implies recognition by the virtues presented by another. It is the basic condition of social life, which involves not only compliance with the rule, but essentially the incorporation of values in order not to require forms of external regulation for its compliance.

Courage: it is a condition associated with willingness for confrontation. Confrontation is understood as the act of making decisions based on the judgment that one makes of a situation and not necessarily the fulfillment of an order dictated by someone. This is perhaps one of the major developers of the individual's moral education.

Determination: It is the gesture related to the fulfillment of a goal, which involves the willingness to act, discipline for its compliance and adherence to principles that guide this action, since the trail used for its compliance may be full of proposals that are contrary to virtue.

Inspiration: it is the consideration of the sensitive in task accomplishment. It is the incorporation of affective and intuitive plans as necessary to the accomplishment of a task that may be imposed by an external or internal determination, resulting from a systematic and not esoteric action.

Equality: refers to the right to participation. It is the search for recognition and for the belonging to what humanizes us, which is life in society. Although utopian, perhaps it is the driving force behind many projects that have the human as the fundamental condition for the development of knowledge, technology or politics.

Multiculturalism

When Pierre de Coubetin developed the idea of Olympism, he believed that the Olympic Movement was justified as promoting intercultural understanding and that sport was a universal language to all people and that, therefore, all people around the world could practice it regardless of where they were. At that historical moment, little was studied about the differences between social groups, mainly because European countries dominated much of the world and imposed their cultural standard [25]. This way of conducting social and international relations changed throughout the 20th century and the sport actively participated in this dynamics.

This topic has been developed in order to discuss the sporting activity as a cultural creation directly related to the historical moment and to geographical conditions in which it is practiced. Therefore, the class focuses on multiculturalism such as respect and valuation of differences, which means the denial of racism or any other form of prejudice or discrimination.

Olympism and Environment

At the meeting reserved for the Environmental issue, the discussion focused on the understanding of sustainable development as part of the notion that the long-term preservation of natural and environmental resources cannot be performed without simultaneous economic, social and political development benefiting the most disadvantaged populations [26] [27].

This is because the application of the concept of sustainable development is responsibility of all persons or institutions of recognized importance in the environmental protection and development. The Olympic Movement's Agenda 21 aims to encourage members of this Movement to actively participate in the sustainable development of the planet.

For many years, the Olympic Movement has been considering the environment as the third pillar of Olympism, after sport and culture. To this end, it developed a policy of protecting the environment expressed in the "Pact of Earth", as well as collaboration actions with the Rio 92, the organization of "green" Olympic Games and the performance of global and regional conferences on sport and environment. This is because one edition of the Olympic Games profoundly alters the life of the host city, which undergoes major remodeling, changing the daily lives of its residents. Therefore, when building or remodeling facilities or planning important sports events, organizers will have to perform a previous study on environmental impacts, which would ensure respect for the cultural, social and natural environment.

Doping

The doping issue is understood in this course as an opportunity not only to discuss what happens in sport, but also an excellent opportunity to talk about the world of drugs, so close to students [27] [28].

The strategy of the class consisted of showing how ergogenic drugs emerged and the relationship of the use of these substances with the increased demands for results. Issues related to the commercialization of the Olympic Games, the transformation of sports into big business and the use of the athlete as part of this gear provided a rich discussion on other illegal ways to win with disrespect to rules and opponents. The possibility of treating this topic with science, chemistry and biology teachers in order to understand more precisely what are these substances, how they are produced and the effects on the human body was also presented.

Legacy

Given the proximity to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Olympic Games, it is essential to understand what is happening in the country and what it represents for the future. After all, many investments with public money have been made, and the participation in this process will be the guarantee of return for citizens, which led to the inclusion of a topic on the different dimensions of the legacy of mega sporting events [28] [29].

The Olympic Games were not always this huge festival that brings together thousands of athletes from around the world in a city chosen years in advance. An Olympic city and the country that hosts it keeps for many years the marks of its accomplishment, either due to the sporting facilities, to the improved infrastructure or to the preparation of the local population to receive people from all over the world.

Olympic legacy is the direct or indirect inheritance in the form of physical facilities, culture, ideal, education, information, documentation or resources generated by the Olympic Games. These were the central concepts developed at this meeting.

Futada [2] states that when dealing with Olympic Education models and with what they propose as methods and examples, one should be aware of the meaning of these proposals in contemporary world. The Olympic Movement with its symbols, rites and imagery is an ideological universe with strong educational appeal, based on the fundamentals of Olympism. However, there are many factors beyond the precepts of Olympism that also influence the dynamics of the Olympic Movement and consequently its educational programs. Some financial, political and power struggle elements are present in the Olympic Movement and in its ideals, influencing this dynamics. That is why, even with undeniable educational potential and theoretical-practical example, one should always assess the validity and appropriateness of an educational program linked to a movement that is influenced by many factors, sometimes positive, sometimes negative.

Concluding remarks

The Olympic values are essentially human values.

The experiment conducted with teachers from public schools of São Paulo was aimed at assisting the work in classroom, offering elements for better understanding and using of thematic Olympism, Olympic values and Olympic Games. Because it is a transversal theme, discussions helped to broaden and deepen knowledge about modern sport, promoting the relationship with other areas of knowledge and widening the possibility of knowledge of both teachers and students, which is one of the consequences of this approach with a large number of teachers of other subjects who were enrolled in the 2013 course.

As pointed out by Futada [2], if on the one hand, there is the possibility of Olympic Education being judged as a relatively vague approach, since it is based on the proposition of universal humanistic values, on the other, its multi-cultural characteristic and inter-relationship with different themes, emanated from discussions about sport and body culture, allow it to be a potent instrument of intervention. Apart from the perspective of qualitative and concrete individual development when using this interdisciplinary knowledge, the space for Sport, Physical Education and Body Culture as a whole is assured, so that they are able to dialogue with other subjects dealing with human development.

The contextualization of contents discussed bringing to the teacher's reality, either in classroom or in the situation of competitions, approached the theoretical references of Olympic education to the reality of school life. The reports showed that the topics covered could be observed in routine situations experienced both within the context of social nucleus, which includes friends, family and coworkers. This means that the production of knowledge finds meaning only if it is directly related to its application in the everyday life.

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