LA PERCEPCIÓN DEL OLIMPISMO DE LOS ESTUDIANTES UNIVERSITARIOS DE EDUCACIÓN FÍSICA Y CIENCIAS DEL DEPORTE: UN ESTUDIO EN LA COMUNIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE MURCIA

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORTS SCIENCE PERCEPTION’S OF OLYMPISM: A STUDY IN AUTONOMOUS COMMUNITY OF MURCIA

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RESUMEN
El objetivo de este estudio es determinar la percepción del Olimpismo desde la perspectiva de los estudiantes de Educación Física y Ciencias de la Actividad Física y el Deporte. La muestra de la investigación estuvo formada por 207 estudiantes de primer curso de dos universidades españolas (la Universidad de Murcia y la Universidad Católica San Antonio). Los participantes completaron el instrumento “Cuestionario sobre la Visión del Olimpismo y sus Repercusiones Educativas” durante los primeros 20 minutos de clase. Los datos muestran un conocimiento bajo de los estudiantes sobre los Juegos Olímpicos, el Movimiento Olímpico y el concepto de Olimpismo. Del mismo modo, también queda reflejado que los participantes tienen un gran interés en la temática del Olimpismo, a pesar de su limitado conocimiento sobre el tema y su baja participación en actividades educativas sobre Olimpismo.

Palabras clave: Movimiento Olímpico, Valores, Olimpismo, Cuestionario.

ABSTRACT
This study aims to determine the perception of Olympism from university students’ of Physical Education and Sport Sciences perspective. The sample consisted of 207 first-year students randomly selected from two spanish universities (University of Murcia and Catholic University of San Antonio). Participants filled out the survey called “Questionnaire about the View of Olimpism and its Educative Repercussions” during the first 20 minutes of participants’ university lessons. The present data confirm the general lack of knowledge about the Olympic Games, the Olympic Movement and the concept of Olympism in university students. In the same way, the results showed that participants have great interest in the topic, despite their limited conceptual knowledge and low participation in educational activities about Olympism.

Keywords: Olympic Movement, Values, Olympism, Questionnaire.
INTRODUCTION

To date there is no general agreement as to the moral and ethical potential benefits of playing sports. People tend to believe that playing sports alone cannot generate values (Gómez-Már mol & Valero, 2013). In this view, sport can either promote integration, cooperation and tolerance, or lead to conflict, exclusion or violence. The question is whether sport can convey moral qualities by itself or, on the contrary, is a neutral activity just like any other instrument (Cecchini, González & Montero, 2007; Durán, 2006; Gutiérrez, 2003; Jiménez, 2006; Telama, 1995). Some researchers are sceptical that sport can instil educational values. They believe that sport could even generate negative (rather than positive) values as a result of the social image typically associated with high-level sports and sports entertainment. In this context, the Olympic Games (OG) are often regarded as a source of controversy and debate. Excessive commercialization, rule breaking, fair-play violations, and the use of performance-enhancing drugs, among other factors, create a fatalistic atmosphere that seriously damages the pedagogical dimension of Olympism (Legido, 2006; Tavares, 1998). Nevertheless, many others see sport as a reflection of the principles that govern modern society, including its strengths and weaknesses (Alfaro, 2008; Bento, 2007; Tavares, 2006).

Sport is a very important and complex social phenomenon that, as stated by Vázquez (2001), can act as an own ideology and as a vehicle for other ideologies. The greatest proponent of sport ideology is Pierre de Coubertin’s Olympic ideology, which exalts courage, universalism, and international solidarity. According to Delgado (2004), Olympic values should not only be defended by a few idealistic or romantic teachers, but through a critical view of modern Olympism that shows real concern about schoolchildren’s education. Unfortunately, Zhang (2013) points out that more and more teachers doubt whether the OG can be a good setting to promote these values. It should be noted that not all values are universal values. Whereas certain values like freedom and equality are rather general, other values can only be understood as promoted by a particular social, cultural, or ethnic group. There is a tendency to prevent teaching from becoming a mere reproduction of widely-accepted values and attitudes (Marín, 2013). This view emphasizes individualistic values, which are highly competitive and materialistic in nature and make it impossible to promote respect and understanding of others (Walch den Tuinder, 1998). Valadez (2014) maintains that Fundamental Rights must be the framework to solve conflicts and initiate dialogue between different cultures, ideologies, and religions. These rights are based on the idea that human dignity is an intrinsic value. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. However, by the end of the 19th century, Coubertin’s concept of Olympism had already proclaimed a set of universal values promoting international understanding (Abreu, 2002). Modern Olympism was born within Western Christian culture and goes beyond ethnic, religious and social relativism, thus acknowledging cultural differences (Müller, 2004; Zhang, 2013). As stated by Todt (2007), few people know that even the world’s greatest sporting event is organized around a philosophy that promotes international understanding, respect for others, and integral education. Dawson, Downward and Mills (2014) point to the tension between Olympic ideology and the reality of the OG. In the same vein, Solar (2003, p. 160) observed that “Olympism” has gradually fallen into oblivion as the “Olympic Games” have become more and more consolidated, which actually mirrors how sport has evolved over the past century. For Müller (2004), negative examples cannot repeal the essential validity of Olympic values as an educational idea.

The Fundamental Principles as codified in the Olympic Charter express that the goal of Olympism is:

<<to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of man, with a view to promoting a peaceful society concerned with the preservation of human dignity. (...) The practice of sport is a human right. Every individual must have the possibility of practising sport, without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play>>
In this regard, there are few sociological studies in Spain that investigate Olympism from an educational perspective. In fact, little is known about how Physical Education teachers in primary and secondary school assess Olympic Ideals. Research done by José María Cagigal is a landmark in the explanation of sport in general, and Olympic sport in particular. With the help of his students at Madrid’s Department of Physical Education and Sports Science (INEF), Cagigal conducted the first nationwide studies on the possible pedagogical values of Olympism (Cagigal, 1972, 1975).

Therefore, the goal of this study is to determine the perception of Olympism from university students’ of Physical Education and Sport Sciences perspective, in particular, about access to information of Olympism, conceptual knowledge of Olympism, values of Olympism and the consideration of Olympism as a curricula content area.

METHODS

The present article reports the results of a survey conducted a few months prior to the 29th Olympic Games held in Beijing in 2008. That study examined how future Physical Education teachers in primary and secondary school perceive international understanding and mutual respect as values promoted by the Olympic Charter (International Olympic Commitee, 2007).

The sample in this pilot study was a group of first-year students from different undergraduate degree programmes related to Physical Education and Sports Science at the University of Murcia (UMU) and the Catholic University of Murcia (UCAM). This paper draws upon the findings by Cagigal (1972, 1975), as well as more recent studies such as Tavares (1998), Julius (2002), Adler and Pansa (2004), Willimczik, (2004), Völz (2006), Wyk et al. (2007) and Nikolaus (2013), among others.

The sample consisted of 207 first-year students randomly selected from the following degrees and universities:

- Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science (UMU): 52.
- Bachelor of Exercise and Sports Science (UCAM): 85.
- Bachelor of Physical Education for Primary School (UMU): 70.

These 207 participants filled out the survey called “Questionnaire about the View of Olympism and its Educative Repercussions” extracted from Molina’s thesis (Molina, 2011) which reliability and consistency index were appropriated for its four factors: Access to Information and Knowledge of Olympism (e.g., “Have you ever participate in academic activities related to Olympic Movement?”; $\alpha = .81$), Conceptual and Historical Knowledge of Olympism (e.g., “Where did the first modern Olympic Game take place?”; $\alpha = .73$), Values of Olympism (e.g., “Does Olympism promote mutual respect?”; $\alpha = .84$) and Olympism as a curricula content area (e.g., “Would you support the inclusion of Olympism in the Physical Education curriculum?”; $\alpha = .88$).

The authors, with the lecturer permission, personally administrated the questionnaires during the first 20 minutes of participants’ university lessons. They reminded the importance of answering all the items as well as the anonymity of their participation. They did not inform any problem about the filling out process.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

From a cyclic and utilitarian perception of research, this study presents its results and their discussion simultaneously.

Sample’s involvement in sport, access to information and knowledge of Olympism

The results of the present study suggest that many of the participants in the survey do physical and sporting activity for recreational purposes (32.1%) and for personal satisfaction (44.3%). These data are consistent with Fernández’s (1997) findings for first-year Physical Education students. Fernández (1997, 39) found that these students do more physical activity than students in other fields of education. Therefore, the amount of physical and sporting activity seems to be determined by the students’ areas of concentration.

Regarding their previous experience with Olympism, the results indicate that most participants associated this concept with Physical Education classes (61%). A smaller number linked Olympism with school events like “Mini Olympics” (21.5%) and “Olympic Day” events (6.7%), both of which
promote multi-sport participation. In short, most participants had become familiar with Olympism through their Physical Education courses at school, whereas multi-sport experiences aimed at spreading the principles of Olympism as established in the Olympic Charter (International Olympic Committee, 2007) seem to be rather uncommon.

When asked about their participation in academic activities related to the Olympic Movement, 76% of the participants claimed they had “never” taken part in these sorts of activities, while 22.5% answered “rarely”. Because all participants were first-year students, their training in Sports Science and/or Physical Education had only just begun, which may account for this result. However, in the university context, Olympism is usually associated with the history of sport. In practice, not many curricula include courses on Olympism (De la Cueva, 2008; Masumoto, 2004; Parry, 2003; Völz, 2006).

Most participants (54%) use media to stay informed on the Olympic Games. “Television” is the most popular option (92.5%), followed by the “Press” (68.3%), the “Internet” (50.8%) and the “Radio” (40%). Other sources of information, such as the university, play a very small role in providing information and knowledge about the OG. However, if case percentages are considered, a substantial increase is observed for “Friends” (37.2%) and “University” (34.7%).

The emphasis on profit that characterizes the media may result in a distorted image of the Olympic ideal and a notion of sport as mere entertainment, which would interfere with the educational message of Olympism. For example, Parent, MacDonald and Goulet (2014) noted how mass media rarely refer to universal Olympic values, such as fraternity and internationalism.

Conceptual and historical knowledge of Olympism

More than half of the participants (60.6%) knew that the first modern OG were held in Athens. Paris was chosen by 26.1% of the subjects, which suggests that students are aware of the importance of this city for modern Olympism. Let us recall that the first Olympic Congress of the newly created International Olympic Committee was held in 1894 at Sorbonne University in Paris, which led to the reestablishment of the event. In contrast, participants were less sure about the year when the first modern Games were held – only 40.9% replied 1896. A few (11.1%) decided on an earlier date (namely 1842) and a similar percentage (11.6%) chose 1908, which was actually the year of the fourth modern Olympics in London.

Students’ answers showed that there is a strong connection between the name Pierre de Coubertin and the concept of Olympism (91.7%). However, the well-known Olympic creed or motto “the most important thing is not to win but to take part” is mistakenly attributed to him by over 80% of the participants. Only 7% accredited the phrase to Monsignor Talbot, Bishop of Pennsylvania. Despite not being mentioned in the Olympic Charter (2007), the Olympic creed has certainly become a very popular phrase in the world of Olympism, and beyond (Prats, 2005). This quote has heavy Olympic content, and though it is generally ascribed to Coubertin, it was first said by Pennsylvania’s Archbishop Monsignor Ethelbert Talbot (Duránte, 1994).

When asked about the role of the Olympic Charter, 45.2% of the participants viewed it as the fundamental set of rules governing Olympism, whereas 51.6% believe it is just another element of the OG opening and closing ceremonies.

Values of Olympism (internationalism, understanding and mutual respect)

The values of respect and international understanding emerge directly from Coubertin’s concept of Olympism. For universal values to be considered Olympic they need to fulfil the following conditions (Zhang, 2013):

1) be current issues;
2) be logically deducible from basic Olympic values; and
3) be universally acceptable; thus adaptable to fit different contexts.

Together with excellence and friendship, respect is one of the fundamental values of Olympism (Maass, 2007). On the whole, Olympic athletes praise the atmosphere of closeness and familiarity that prevails in the OG (Tavares, 1998). Similarly, Cagigal (1975) asserted that the OG encourage mutual understanding and knowledge of one another, and they are generally regarded as instruments to combat prejudice and social differences.
The results of the present study strongly support the values of understanding and mutual respect promoted by Olympism, and they are consistent with Willimczik (2004) regarding the role of Olympic pedagogy in encouraging international understanding. These values (understanding and mutual respect) were provided by the analysis of the interviews developed by Willimczik (2004) with teachers who had positive attitudes towards Olympic pedagogy and its application in the classroom environment to create a multicultural atmosphere built on tolerance and mutual respect.

**Olympism as curriculum content area**

More than 82% of the participants supported the inclusion of Olympism in the Physical Education curriculum, particularly in the Games and Sports section. Along this line, Delgado (2004) establishes the development of Olympism through:

- theory, rules, and standards governing Olympic sports;
- observation of different Olympic sporting events;
- analysis of Olympic sporting events and their relations;
- critical view of the socio-cultural dimension of sport;
- participation in different Olympic sports; and
- cooperation and commitment to eradicate aggressiveness, violence, drug use and contempt for others.

Furthermore, 74% of the subjects in the survey believed that Olympism can address different areas of the curriculum. These data are consistent with previous research with PE teachers that advocated the interdisciplinary implementation of Olympism in education (Adler & Pansa, 2004; Willimczik, 2004). Binder (2007) observed that the latest plans in Olympic Education have been designed to meet social needs and demands by introducing interdisciplinary materials in the curriculum. A considerable number of participants (70.6%) supported the cross-disciplinary application of Olympism. Education for health, Education for equal opportunity, and Education for peace (in that order) were the best-regarded cross-curricular content areas. Additionally, participants believed that respect for cultural diversity facilitates the application of the Olympic Ideal to different education systems. As many as 93.1% of the students in the survey think of Olympism as a universal subject that could be introduced in different national curricula. However, nowadays, among scientific community, there is controversy about whether Olympics should become an own curricula area or, on the contrary, an interdisciplinary or cross-disciplinar area in the educative system. This discussion could be considered as a future works issue.

A number of authors even deem it necessary to include training and/or university courses on Olympism for Exercise and Sports Science students (Durántez, 2006; Julius, 2002; Todt et al. 2007; Willimczik, 2004) due to the current lack of formation these professionals suffer in this topic and the relevance it has for the future education in values through sport activities.

**CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of the present study reveal how future Physical Education instructors encourage the inclusion of Olympism in curriculum. More than 70% of the participants in the survey supported the cross-curricular and interdisciplinary application of Olympism. Participants showed great interest in the topic, despite their limited conceptual knowledge and low participation in activities that promote the use of Olympism in the classroom. The present data suggest a general lack of knowledge about the Olympic Games, the Olympic Movement, and the concept of Olympism that prevails from primary school to university (Masumoto, 2004; Pawłucki, 2009; Rychtecký, 2010).

The results reported in this paper will allow us to perform a thorough sociological analysis that explores how future Physical Education professionals perceive Olympism, and their knowledge about Olympism. Delgado (2004) suggests examining Olympism both as an interdisciplinary and cross-curricular subject that spans different educational stages, and as a universal content area that transcends national curricula due to its great impact and sociological influence.
REFERENCES


investigación e innovación en didáctica de las ciencias sociales.


