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OLYMPISM IN TERTIARY EDUCATION – NEW CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES

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SUMMARY

Olympism, though a timeless ideal, was given shape in the late 19th century, by Baron Pierre de Coubertin and retains its sense of relevance in the 21st century, not least in the form of educational syllabi. This paper aims to critically present ideas and practices in the implementation of “Olympic Education” that were attempted for the first time at the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus during the academic year 2008–2009. The course was designed to assist students to increase their awareness of sport as a means not only to develop into top level athletes, but also to become good citizens and women and men of peace. Consistent with the aim of Olympic Education programmes to promote the cultivation of the body in parallel with the exercise and expansion of mental activities and capabilities, this paper argues that there is a demonstrable need to design and develop such courses as can be implemented for diverse groups. We conclude that efforts to implement “Olympic Education” programmes at a tertiary level may be beneficial in the dissemination of Olympic ideals and the harmonious, balanced and all-round development of students.

Key words: Olympism, tertiary education, Olympic Education, course

INTRODUCTION

The promotion of Olympism is one of the more important ideological goals of the Olympic Movement. Its scope extends beyond the elite competitors who attend the quadrennial games and speaks to everyone in respect of Olympic Philosophy (Simitsek, 1987). Pierre de Coubertin, who is considered to be the “father” of the modern Olympic Movement, thought of himself predominantly as an educator, and had a key objective of reforming educational methodologies and standards. In this regard his efforts – originally restricted to French schools – were directed towards making modern sport an important and distinct part of school curricula and activities. His inspiration was the national malaise in physical fitness and moral vigour of the soldiery of France (Cleret, 2012). Nevertheless, his ambitions were global. His strategy was to introduce educational subjects in schools, designed

to address sport as a way to embrace body, will and character (Kidd, 1996a; Müller, 2004; Corral et al., 2010; Culpan and Wigmore, 2010).

While Olympic philosophy has not ossified, it has undergone certain mutations. It has been adopted at an institutional level by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). When an institution takes control of any set of ideas there will be a certain amount of contestation before harmony is established. Succeeding Presidents of the IOC have variously supported Olympism as a lofty (if not always coherent) ideal. In modern times the IOC describes it thus:

“Olympism is a philosophy of life, exalting and combining in a balanced whole the qualities of body, will and mind. Blending sport with culture and education, Olympism seeks to create a way of life based on the joy of effort, the educational value of good example and respect for universal, fundamental and ethical principles” (IOC, 2010, 11).

This official IOC statement reflects well the educational vision of De Coubertin, which was embodied in the creation of the International Olympic Academy in Ancient Olympia (IOA) in 1961 (Parry, 2003). Since its inception, the IOA supports National Olympic Academies to spread Olympic values by hosting and facilitating numerous international events, educational sessions, conferences and seminars every year, to the benefit of the Olympic movement (Parry, 2003; Georgiadis, 2010). In this respect, it is considered to be the central point for the educational mission of the Olympic Movement since its founding (Binder, 2001).

Following in the footsteps of De Coubertin, sport in education continues to be widely considered as an important cornerstone in the preparation of young people to enter society smoothly, by equipping them with the necessary skills. This functionalist understanding of sport instrumentalises sport by placing it in the service of broader external goals such as health, multiculturalism, life-long learning, the environment, the development of social skills such as volunteerism, and other social educational aspects. These issues have been included in Olympic Education programmes over the last two decades (Georgiadis, 2010).

The term “Olympic Education” was initially introduced and formalised in the 1970s (Müller, 1975; Müller, 2004). It was designed to reflect holistic methodologies and activities that focus on developing rounded individuals and, in this respect, has a wider remit than many other academic disciplines. For this reason, Olympic Education is (indeed must be) based on the IOC’s self-proclaimed fundamental principles and characteristics defining the human personality (Müller, 2004).

It can be argued that, in the complex and culturally heterogeneous world in which we now live, Olympism is needed more than ever as an educational ideology for sports. In contemporary society there is a need to create programmes in which people have the opportunity to develop new skills and traits in order to retain their culture, national identity, principles, values and ideals while they pursue a logically exclusive goal (i.e. winning) (Georgiadis, 2010). These programmes should be designed in a way that helps people develop in a multiple, harmonious, balanced and all-round manner so as to effectively face the new challenges and needs of modern society (Müller, 2004).

This essay presents ideas and practices of implementation of Olympic Education programmes in the syllabi of Tertiary Education institutions. More specifically, the paper describes and critically analyzes an educational undergraduate course (hereafter refer to as “the course” or “the Olympic Education course”) that was implemented for the first

time at the Department of Education at the University of Cyprus during the academic year 2008–2009. It presents the objectives, content and methodology of this course which was designed to be included as an elective course of the University of Cyprus' Syllabus. Furthermore, it presents and evaluates students' opinions about the Olympic Education course, so that it might be used as a complementary educational tool in Universities of different countries. The next sections present, in turn, the theoretical background to the course, its rationale, and the methodology that was used to fulfill its aims. The results of the study are presented and discussed before the final conclusions and learning points.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The Olympic Games and their ideals have inspired numerous educational programmes, all over the world. During the last few decades, there has been a remarkable growth in the educational programmes conducted in conjunction with the Olympic movement (Kidd 1996b). The Olympic principles of fair play, tolerance, pursuit of excellence and the harmonious development of the whole human being can be used to inspire educators in different parts of the world. Again, it is important to note that these represent the statement of ideals. It is of course true that the movement and associated practices do not always reflect such ideals and there is a significant literature on such lapses.

In many countries today, Olympic Education programmes have been developed (Binder, 2001; Naul, 2008; Rychtecký, 2010). Several countries also implement such programmes during the staging of the Olympic Games (Hadjistephanou, 2008). These programmes reflect both similarities and differences in their approach and implementation methodologies. The variations are typically the result of cultural, geographic and political influences. For example, in Greece, one of the programme's key objectives was to initiate a strong volunteering movement that would cover all the facets of young people's social life (Georgiadis, 2010). A separate approach was taken by China, where the main objectives of the Education Programmes surrounding the Olympic Games were the promotion of cross-cultural understanding and respect, and the recognition and promotion of national identities through Olympic athletes.

The universality of interest in Olympic Education is equally visible in the 1988 winter Olympic Games of Calgary and 2002 at Salt Lake City, which were the main incentives and drivers for the design and the implementation of Olympic Education programmes for Canada and USA respectively. Similarly, programmes were developed in Australia in 1998 and 2000 that included – amongst other things – the development of manuals for Olympic Education to accompany the Games and their pilot implementation in different countries (Binder, 2000; 2005). Moreover, in 2000 an International Teacher's Resource book on Olympic and Sport Education for Schools, "Be a champion in Life!", was piloted in Australia, Brazil, China, Africa and England. (Binder, 2000). This type of approach is not without its critics, who argue that these kits and corresponding activities (i) are not curriculum-specific; (ii) do not necessarily address particular learning needs of children; (iii) are neither educationally coherent nor enduring; and (iv) are not pedagogically satisfactory (Culpan, 2008).

The Olympic Games of Athens 2004 were a milestone for the development of Olympic Educational programmes within educational curricula in Greece. Despite the small size of

Greece and the comparatively limited financial resources available to Olympic Education, the programme was considered innovative. It was driven predominantly by the fact that the Athens Organising Committee desired to highlight the fact that Greece, as the birthplace of Olympic Games, could continue to take a lead in areas of global interest relating to Olympism. The core elements of the programme were sport, culture, combating social exclusion, multiculturalism, Olympic truce and volunteerism (Georgiadis, 2010).

On the other hand, the largest “Olympic Education” programme was implemented in primary and secondary schools in China, on the occasion of the Beijing Olympic Games of 2008 (Brownell, 2009). This programme included conferences, textbooks, courses for schools and universities, and implemented the ideals of “Green Olympics, High Tech Olympics, People’s Olympics” and the “one world, one dream” philosophy. Furthermore, schools were designated as “Olympic Education demonstration schools” with the responsibility of devoting at least two hours per month to Olympic Education activities (Brownell, 2009). At the end, hundreds of schools had engaged in “hand-in-hand sharing” with the Demonstration Schools and millions of students nationwide were involved. An interesting action with strong educational value, was the “heart-to heart” sister school programme organized among 210 schools in Beijing establishing a relationship with one of the 205 National Olympic Committees and five Paralympic Committees. University experts were also involved for the training of teachers.

There are, however, those who argue that the effectiveness of these programmes was limited with respect to their pedagogical value. For example, they were criticized as “ideological inscription”, lacking a critical pedagogical base (Culpan, 2008). Nevertheless, the sheer size of the participation is noteworthy.

The positive experiences and tangible results of the Olympic Education programmes in these global events lend support to the claims by the IOC regarding its strategic role in promoting education at national, regional and international level as part of, as well as complementary to, the Olympic Games themselves. The IOC regards Olympic Education and culture as the second dimension of Olympism, together with sport. The Olympic Values Education Programme (OVEP), the Olympic Studies Centre and the Olympic Museum in Lausanne are key examples. The IOC established a focused committee, the Commission for Culture & Olympic Education, with its dual objectives being the promotion of Culture and Olympic Education – not just as part of the Olympic Games but as a continuous institutional approach to life-long learning.

Furthermore, it could be argued that the effectiveness of the Olympic Education programmes is exemplified through the fact that the IOC has implemented the Youth Olympic Games in Singapore 2010. These Games gave special emphasis on education with the Olympic values of healthy lifestyle and social responsibility as its key elements (Rogge, 2009). The Culture and Education Programme (CEP) has received positive feedback following its introduction, and was considered one of the most innovative elements of the Games. It was based on five themes, seven formats and over 50 different activities, most of which took part in the Youth Olympic village (Doll-Tepper, 2011). However, critical commentators have challenged the need and value of the Youth Olympic Games, focusing for example in areas such as age appropriateness.

Britain adopted a similar approach in relation to Olympic Education on the occasion of the London 2012 Olympic Games. The official London 2012 education programme

entitled “Get Set” includes activities for different ages and different themes. The organizers want to use the power of the Olympic and Paralympic Games to inspire children and young people across the UK and around the world. One such example is “Podium” which is The Further & Higher Education Unit that was set up to help colleges, universities and their students to maximize their engagement with all aspects of the Games (PODIUM, 2011).

Reinforcing the claims of success of Olympic Education, there are several examples in countries across the globe. The main vehicle of implementation is educational programmes at all levels. Specifically, cases are identified where Olympic Education programmes have been implemented through the Physical Education courses (with major examples identified in Africa and Asia); alternatively some countries have adopted an integrated approach where Olympic Education is taught through all the courses on the curriculum (mostly in Europe); or as autonomous courses specifically focusing on Olympic Education (Asia and America); or as part of other courses or activities – seminars, workshops, NOA programmes, Olympic Clubs, etc. (Georgiadis, 2010). For example, Olympic education in New Zealand has taken considerable steps in the last decade. As part of the New Zealand Government’s Health and Physical Education Curriculum, Olympic education and Olympism is a mandatory part of all New Zealand children during their studies, as part of the Attitudes and Values syllabus (Culpan, 2008).

To be successful, however, we consider that Olympic Education programmes should be delivered in a structured and systematic way as part of University curricula. Such educational approaches can take advantage of students’ critical thinking and help instill knowledge as well as create “ambassadors” of the messages of Olympism within the student community itself.

RATIONALE

Many of Cyprus’s citizens responded to the Athens Olympic Games with enthusiasm. The Cyprus Olympic Committee established an “ATHENS 2004” office in Cyprus, with the sole objective to actively participate and contribute to the preparations for the staging of the Olympic Games. This office cooperated in numerous ways with the Athens Olympic Committee 2004 (ATHOC, 2004). Between 2001 and 2004, it held presentations of the ATHOC 2004 initiatives and programmes and provided reading, promotional and informational material to numerous schools. These activities elicited numerous actions in Cyprus related to Olympism and the Olympic Games, including inspiring athletes and other leaders in sport. Cyprus was chosen as the last destination of the Olympic Torch, before it travelled to Greece for the Games. In fact, on July 7th 2004, the Torch was carried to the University of Cyprus during the graduation ceremony. Cyprus was also represented at the Olympic and Paralympic Games by more than 1,500 volunteers who willingly offered their services, inspired by the Olympic Volunteerism Movement “I will be there too”. This effort shows that Cyprus as a Greek island sharing the same language, religion and ethics with Greece, was inspired and tangibly contributed to the greatest sports event of contemporary Greek history via key initiatives such as the Olympic Torch Relay, the Cultural Olympiad, Olympic Education and Olympic Volunteerism.

The University of Cyprus entered a protocol of cooperation with the Cyprus Olympic Committee for joint activities and actions related to the Athens Olympic Games. Indeed, the University formed a special Senate Committee with an exclusive focus on the Athens Games and the participation and contribution of the University to the promotion and success of the Games. Following the conclusion of the Games, the Department of Education continued the cooperation agreement with the Cyprus Olympic Committee, in matters related to Olympic Education. These provided all necessary conditions and motivated the University to sanction a special Olympic Education course to promote Olympic ideals available to all students irrespective of academic course or orientation. Some of these students also participated as volunteers or torchbearers in the Athens 2004 Olympic Games. The educational course was named “Olympic Education” and was implemented for the first time as an elective course, at the University of Cyprus during the academic year 2008–2009.

The Course

The course was quite intense, and was taught throughout an entire Semester at the University of Cyprus and involved twenty-six lessons, delivered twice per week, each lasting seventy-five minutes. Its focus was on the basic principles of Olympic Education and Olympism as a practical philosophy.

Participant Demographics

The course was attended by a registered student population comprising 59 students from 12 different departments of the University and specifically; the Departments of: Psychology, Public and Business Administration, Economics, English Studies, Chemistry, Physics, French; Social and Political Sciences, Education, Computer Science, Mathematics and Statistics, and Electrical and Computer Engineering.

Two forms of assessment were used to evaluate the course. The first was an evaluation questionnaire and the second a set of open-ended questions which were given at the final exam.

The Olympic Education Course

The course aimed at: (a) introducing students to the values of the Olympic tradition, (b) understanding of issues related to sports ethics, and (c) developing practices and methods for the formation of positive attitudes towards sport and Olympism as a way of life. For achieving these goals, the course included several themes and a wide range of subjects related to a broad spectrum of areas. Such areas included the history, the organization, the operational aspects and the spiritual content of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, Olympic Education programmes that had been implemented in other countries, the International Olympic Committee, the International Olympic Academy, and other important parameters of the Olympic Movement, its challenges and its contribution to contemporary society.

The course material was designed to utilize several teaching methods and approaches, also taking advantage of a diverse group of visiting guests and speakers. Their contribution

was not simply to deliver lectures but to interact, cooperate, challenge and exchange ideas with the student community in relation to the subject matters that were examined on each occasion.

Of particular interest were themes around the educational and pedagogical value of Olympism. The overall teaching approach attached particular emphasis on the social and practical implications of Olympism in everyday life. The course was also designed to be highly interactive in that it allowed and encouraged students to actively participate and volunteer ideas and suggestions. A specific example of “role play” involved the students assuming that they were volunteers at the Athens Olympic Games, choosing a location to support a specific set of objectives and actions.

The course comprised a wide spectrum of focus areas and subjects. For this reason, the syllabus’ time constraints and course requirements dictated a careful selection of areas to be addressed in order to achieve maximum alignment to the ideals of the Olympic movement. In addition, the structure and organisation of the course content needed to be such that it facilitated thematic complementarity and consistency.

The course set, as a key objective, to introduce students initially to its overall content, knowledge and philosophy of the course, in order to enable them to actively participate and interact amongst them and with external, visiting guests and speakers in a constructive and imaginative way across all thematic areas of Olympic Education. Visiting guests talked about their “Olympic Journey”, also showing photos and videos whilst sharing experiences. They also discussed how this journey affected their lives and how they would advise others to use the Olympic ideals as drivers for bettering oneself. As the course started in September 2008, immediately after Beijing Olympic and Paralympic Games, it also drew on examples from Beijing throughout its duration.

The key delivery methods and educational tools that were used, comprised lectures – supported by audiovisual aids – discussion groups, role play, and coursework. In addition, external guests and other visiting speakers were invited to enhance the perspectives of students and allow them to constructively challenge their ideas.

FIRST PHASE – OLYMPIC KNOWLEDGE

During the first phase of the programme several lectures were delivered, designed to immerse students to the essence of the course. The aim of these lectures was to facilitate an understanding of the history and importance of the Olympic Games, the fundamental principles of Olympism, the structure of the Olympic movement, the meaning and value of athletes as role models and the challenges of the Olympic movement. The lectures were also designed to deliver an overview of Olympic Education programmes implemented around the world; describe the importance of the Youth Olympic Games; explain the cultural aspects of the Olympic Education course; and promote fair play. Throughout its delivery, the course was supported via the use of audiovisual aids such as videos and documentaries as well as structured presentations, in order to more effectively immerse students in the educational aspects of information and activities relating to Olympism.

SECOND PHASE – OLYMPISM IN ACTION

Overall, the participants were encouraged to research, discuss, critically evaluate and after presentations conclude with their fellow students as to various subjects such as Sports Ethics and Olympic challenges. In addition to the discussion groups, external and visiting facilitators and guest speakers with Olympic credentials, experiences and knowledge were invited to present and participate as inspiring models. Moreover, coursework included site visits to key landmarks and locations (such as the Cyprus National Olympic Committee Headquarters) during which students had the opportunity to exchange views and ideas with key members of the local Olympic community.

Data collection

Questionnaire: Since the Fall Semester 2005–2006, the University of Cyprus has run a formal and compulsory process applied by the Centre for Teaching and Learning of the University of Cyprus, designed to evaluate courses that it runs for all instructors. This is achieved via a structured Questionnaire that is distributed to all classes in the last two weeks of every semester before the final exams. The Questionnaire is considered as an important assessment tool and, for this specific course, the 4th version was used (see for more details the Evaluation Questionnaire of the Centre for Teaching and Learning of the University of Cyprus).

The questionnaire was divided into 3 sections. The first section comprised questions regarding the student in relation to the course. The second section included questions regarding the course evaluation and the third section dealt with demographics. The questions referring to the course evaluation requested participants to report on the perceived extent of success in achieving the goals which were defined, the usefulness of the bibliography, the alignment of the coursework to the course objectives, the extent to which the evaluation methods were perceived as fair, the degree to which the scheduled syllabus was covered, the extent to which exams were compatible with the syllabus and the course objectives, the extent to which the course was well-organised, and the adequacy of audio-visual means that had been used.

In addition, students were requested to respond to the thematic sections/topics, with regards to their comprehension and the interest they created, and what – if anything – should be emphasized less and more. Furthermore, they had to report on the positive and less positive elements of the course (e.g., teaching methods, content). Generally, students were called to express their opinion in statements on a 5-point Likert scale (1 indicating Never/Not at all/Not good at all and 5 indicating Always/Very much/Extremely Good).

Open-ended exam questions

The other part of the evaluation was conducted based on the final examination questions given to students. These questions demanded a degree of critical thinking requiring students to provide specific examples and thoughts in defense of the arguments they put forward.

Data analysis

In correspondence to the aims of the course, both quantitative and qualitative approaches were used to analyse the data. The quantitative analysis was based on the standards and methods used by the University whereas the qualitative assessments and conclusions were based on a selection of students' views and responses.

Questionnaire Results

The course had almost universal appeal, as it attracted students who were close to complete their studies as well as students who had just started their degrees. In particular, the students of the Department of Education chose the course as a free elective of the department. Most other students chose the particular course as a free elective of other departments. The majority of the students were in their third or fourth year whereas a small percentage was 1st or 2nd year students.

Based on the formal evaluation process, it was evident that the great majority of students (85%) felt the course relevant to them and had made a positive choice to attend it. An even larger majority (more than 90%) considered it to be not only interesting and appealing, but also effective and rewarding as it was structured well and to have achieved the goals and objectives which had been set at its commencement (91%). The bibliography was identified as very useful by around 80% of the students, whereas a similar percentage responded that the evaluation methods were very fair. One of the most important reported achievements was that more than 88% of students perceived that the scheduled syllabus was covered and that its delivery was structured and interesting (84%). Finally, 80% of the students commented that visual aids were instrumental and extremely useful.

Open-ended Questions – Results

The key views expressed by students were to a large extent consistent and related to (a) the personal impact on students' own lives; (b) ways to tackle violence; (c) an improved level of acceptance of diversity; (d) doping; and (e) the practical aspects of educational courses on Olympism.

Referring to the personal impact of the course on students' own lives, one student reflected:

“These activities helped me realize that what was more important than winning, was participating as it gave me the same personal satisfaction. I didn't use to be a “team player” type at all (and I am ashamed for that), but after that year, I realized the importance to share and interact with other people.”

With regard to the issue of violence, students focused their attention on the misplaced promotion of violent incidents in stadiums because they “sell”. At the same time they felt that such promotion had the additional adverse effect of creating negative role models for young people to follow. This is exemplified by the comments of one student who said:

“The media pay more attention to the damage caused by hooligans rather than the good example and achievements of athletes on the field. They only portray the ‘bad’ side of

sports rather than examples of outstanding athletes who should be promoted as positive role models.”

Regarding the acceptance of diversity, students developed themes around the acceptance of people with disabilities, the Paralympic Games and racism. One student wrote:

“Another key lesson of Olympic Education is the acceptance of diversity. This is exemplified by the Paralympics as we observe and admire people with disabilities delivering great achievements. When we see people [...] to have such mental (and often physical) strength and stamina then we are taught a great deal, especially to appreciate what we have.”

As to the challenges presented by doping, students approached the issue in terms of education, awareness and information dissemination to athletes, coaches, and all those involved in sport regarding the negative effects of doping on health. A student’s comment shared by many others was:

“We are recipients of news having to do with doping, athletes who have resorted to drugs and similar substances for the sole purpose of stealing victory, the gold medal and the rest of the benefits offered by this victory, in a sneaky and unfair way. Such events sully the name of sport.”

In relation to the practical aspects of Olympic Education, students stressed the need to integrate Olympic Education in the curricula of tertiary education with the aim of introducing students at an early age to the ideal of fair play. Commenting on the role of visiting guests and speakers during the educational process, a student indicated that

“Olympic Education is a course that should be given due importance. [...] The teacher can create and use highly constructive and valuable learning processes, by, for example, inviting athletes and coaches to bequeath to students the importance and role of teamwork and fair play through real stories that can inspire them.”

A more elaborate comment presented a more practical side regarding ways to promote Olympic ideals:

“Fair play, respect and acceptance of diversity, cooperation and teamwork are some of the values that can not be so easily or effectively promoted through other types of courses. All these values can be supported through live presentations and examples by real athletes.”

The above responses reflect an underlying consistency of views across the course participants, and demonstrate that this course enhanced their awareness of the key Olympic values in a way that affected their perceptions.

In the context of the need for, and value of, engaging sport athletes, coaches, other key stakeholders and spectators in education and/or broader society, students focused their attention on the need to have and use role models. They identified many examples of such models and the ways that they can be constructively and positively (but also negatively) be used during and after their sporting careers. The importance of their contribution was evaluated in an educational as well as in a social aspect. One student suggested that

“[...] there are athletes who engage in sport and promote the ideals of Olympism, trying to earn recognition and respect. They try for the best and if this leads to a position on the podium, they consider this as an added bonus. One such athlete in the Olympic Games in Beijing lost the medal for a whisker, yet his smile on the day showed that the medal of satisfaction for the glory of his homeland was indeed won.”

With regards to the Olympic Games motto, students demonstrated its pedagogical importance either via its sporting angle, or as a philosophy of life. Notable themes shared amongst students are reflected in the following comments: “The motto of the Olympic Games should be adopted in several aspects of our lives since it emphasizes the continuous strive and effort to improve and better ourselves.” In a similar vein, another student commented that “the deeper meaning of the Olympic Games motto is a call to all athletes to overcome their own self and achieve their objectives, within the framework of fair play.”

The question of Volunteerism, and the value it delivers, also attracted numerous responses by students, who focused on the need to enjoy and benefit from this valuable experience at many levels, not only in sports, as it was deemed to help them grow as people. Some passages are inspiring, whilst others are truly motivational:

“Volunteering is based on unconditionally offering oneself. Everyone has to act in his life through volunteering. Through social interaction people grow personally as well as a group and the entire society of which they are active members.”

When asked to critically evaluate the universality, applicability and relevance of Olympic ideals in modern society, various (often conflicting) views were expressed. Most interesting among student responses was the almost universally expressed view that modern society values winning medals, prize money, or setting new records at the expense of fair play. The most interesting responses were:

“The ideals of Olympia can and should become a beacon to guide us all not only in sports, but in all areas of our lives” and “In a society which has commercialize sports, which spent huge sums to organize the games, things seem a bit difficult. [...] but we can not ignore or forget the majority of athletes who compete in a fair and honourable way. They represent our hopes, as also those who have internalised the Olympic values and ideals as part of their everyday lives.”

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to present and critically evaluate an Olympic Education course designed to immerse students in the ideals of Olympism and connect past and contemporary educational and cultural values. The results of the course suggest that it had diverse appeal, and that the great majority of students felt the course relevant to them and had made a positive choice to attend it. An even larger majority considered it to be not only interesting and appealing, but also effective and rewarding as it was structured well and had achieved the goals and objectives which had been set at its commencement. Importantly, students suggested that they chose the course for its content (i.e. the Olympic Games that were perceived to be a major global event). In addition, the low drop-out rate, as well as the fact that attendees registered for this course even though it was an elective for them, underlines that its content was perceived as of value to numerous academic directions. This is extremely encouraging, as it can be used to promote the implementation of similar efforts to incorporate Olympic Education courses in Universities and incorporate “Olympic values” in all syllabuses, in this way attracting future educators to Olympic ideals and to achieve a multi-faceted and cross-disciplinary approach to Olympic Education, as Binder suggests (Binder, 2001).

The key learning point for educators who are considering implementing Olympic Education in their Universities and courses is that the basic objectives should stay the same. It is however necessary to add new elements in the context of the culture, country and diversity, interests and even age of the audience that will be addressed.

The results of this study confirmed that the Olympic Education course had a positive impact on the development of students, which reinforces the findings of Georgiadis (2010) and emphasizes the important role and place of Olympic Education in education programmes of different countries. Taking into account Rychtecký's (2010) suggestions that Olympism should be an integral part of professional training for future Physical Education teachers, coaches and managers, it is important that such programmes be incorporated in University syllabi. In this way, the educational value of topics related to Olympic Education will be more effectively communicated, explored and institutionalized. Experience shows that Olympic Education programmes have delivered highly significant and positive results in other countries, especially those countries that had organized the Olympic Games in the past (Binder, 2005).

Alternatively, Olympic Education content may be included within programmes embedded within other course syllabuses such as Ethics. The successful implementation of such programmes may be assisted using various approaches and methodologies. For example, they may form mandatory courses for students majoring in educational fields or be offered to all students as an elective, irrespective of academic orientation or future career direction. The adoption of such a universal approach may be supported based on the diverse content of such programs and their flexible structure which allows them to address the needs of all students.

CONCLUSION

The course presented in this paper has shown the importance of connecting the values of Olympic Education with the Olympic movement and with tertiary education through specific teaching and learning Physical Education or other related programmes. The University of Cyprus and its course on Olympic Education, as an example of good practice, can be used as a model for other Universities which could introduce similar programmes in their curricula. Further research into the impact of Olympic Education programmes needs to be conducted so as to determine the value they can deliver, including potentially a direct comparison with the corresponding results that can be achieved via Physical Education Programs. Since Olympic Education (within Physical Education or standalone) programmes promote the cultivation of the body in parallel with the exercise and expansion of mental activities and capabilities, there is a need to design and develop such courses that can be implemented in diverse groups. This effort will be highly beneficial towards the spread of the Olympic ideals and the harmonious, balanced and all-round development of students and young people alike.

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OLYMPISMUS V TERCÍÁRNÍM VZDĚLÁVÁNÍ – NOVÉ VÝZVY A PŘÍLEŽITOSTI

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SOUHRN

Olympismus je nadčasovým ideálem, svou podobu získal na konci 19. století od barona Pierra de Coubertina a je relevantní i v 21. století, zvláště v podobě sylabů vzdělávacích kurzů. Cílem tohoto článku je kritické

představení současných myšlenek a praxe s ohledem na implementaci kurzu „Olympijská výchova“, jenž byl poprvé vyzkoušen v akademickém roce 2008–2009 na katedře výchovy na Kyperské univerzitě. Kurz byl sestaven s cílem pomoci studentům zvýšit povědomí o sportu nejen ve smyslu výchovy vrcholových sportovců, ale také ve smyslu výchovy dobrých a mírumilovných občanů. Tento článek tvrdí v souladu s cílem programů olympijské výchovy, jímž je tělesný rozvoj při cvičení a současně rozvoj mentálních schopností, že existuje zřejmá potřeba navrhovat a rozvíjet obdobné kurzy pro různé skupiny. Na závěr ukazujeme prospěšnost snahy zavádět programy olympijské výchovy v terciárním vzdělávání pro šíření olympijských ideálů a pro harmonický a všestranný rozvoj studentů.

Klíčová slova: olympismus, terciární vzdělávání, olympijská výchova, kurz

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