The Youth Olympic Games: A Vehicle for World Peace?

Singapore 2010
Innsbruck 2012
Nanjing 2014
Lillehammer 2016
2018?

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Overview

• The Youth Olympic Games Cultural and Educational Program – Defined
• What are common Olympic Educational Programs
• Where do the Peace Movement and Peace education programs fit in an Olympic context
• Contradictions between Elite Competition and the relative value of the Youth Olympic Games’ Cultural and Educational Program (CEP)
• Conclusion and Further Research
What is the Youth Olympic Games Cultural and Educational Program (CEP)

“The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) aims to prepare a generation of young athletes to have an ethical approach to sport – with strong values and principles. The YOG has a strong focus placed on its Cultural and Educational Program (CEP) alongside with the athletic competition. The CEP seeks to prepare young athletes to be self-disciplined, responsible, who understand, appreciate, and accept different cultures, value the environment, and exemplify the Olympic values: excellence, respect, and friendship.” (J. Rogge)
Can the YOG promote peace and goodwill among individuals and nations when the modern Olympic Games has struggled to do so?

- The YOG may have greater success because its main audience is youth.
- Youth although separated geographically are more connected through an universal technological language and less tinted by racial and religious undertones.
- Empowering youth to be leaders, champions, contributors, ambassadors.
Contradictions in YOG Priorities

Are the Youth Olympic Games an example of the willingness of a mega sport governing body (IOC) to accept and actively promote the strategy for increased commodification and commericalization of youth sport in order to maximize brand extension, activation and profits?
Apparent Contradictions in YOG Priorities

Are the Youth Olympic Games an extension or dilution of the Olympic Brand?

Is this initiative just a ruse to capture the 14 – 18 youth demographic to become more interested in the Olympic Games as a part of their sport and entertainment consumption?
YOG Culture & Education Program:
Is it Just More Lip Service to Lost Olympic Values

• Cost vs. Benefits
• Who profits?
• Who wins?
• Who loses?
• Is this a new version of IOC “greenwashing”?
• Will age – fixing and doping in the YOG be the next IOC scandal?
Does Winning Matter at the YOG?

Are the YOG athlete participants expected to be “peace warriors” as youth crusaders for the values of Olympism or merely the adolescent soldiers of a movement that equates sport development and peace building with the processes of a “business as usual” approach to in the multi-billion dollar world of monetized, commercialized youth sport?
Olympic Educational Programs

• The teaching of Olympism has not received the same scholarly attention that other aspects of Olympism – such as commercialization or history – has gotten. (Muller 2004)

• Olympic education for authors like Kidd (1985), Gessman (1992), or Grupe (1996) is ethical education carried out in the context of physical education and sport with an emphasis on fair play and intercultural understanding.

• **Basic objectives:**
  - Enrich human personality through physical activity and sport blended with culture as lifelong experience
  - Develop a sense of human solidarity
  - Encourage peace, mutual understanding and respect for different cultures
  - Encourage excellence and achievement in accordance with fundamental Olympic ideas
  - Develop a sense of the continuity of human civilization as explored through ancient and modern Olympic history

  (Binder, 2010)
Olympic Educational Programs (cont)

• **Themes:**
  - Body, Mind and Sport. Inspiring children to participate.
  - Fair Play: The Spirit of Sport in Life and Community
  - Multiculturalism: Learning to Live with Diversity
  - In Pursuit of Excellence: Identity, Self-Confidence, and Self-Respect
  - The Olympics: Present and Past. Celebrating the Olympic Spirit
    (Binder, 2010)

• Olympic educational programs wrestle with pedagogical question of:
  HOW do students learn those values and behavior?
  HOW can teachers use different pedagogical strategies to achieve these results? What kind of activities do help students to learn about respect?
  HOW do children learn to play fair?
Peace Movement and Peace Education: in an Olympic Context

• Olympic Movement: an educational and peace movement through sport

• Olympic education for the peace movement:
  - Olympic model school programs
  - Content of peace education in Olympic readers
  - School Partnership Programs
  - The appeal for peace in Opening Ceremony
Peace Movement and Peace Education: in an Olympic Context

• Activities for peace education in Olympic educational programs:
  - Lectures about peace and war in relation with Olympic truce
  - Expression of the Olympic spirit by making students up as peace agents
  - Selection of exchange partner schools (elementary, secondary) through NOCs
  - Writing essays and presentations about ‘the distance between war and me’
SYOGOC had approximately 2 years to prepare for the YOG

- Athletic competition (# of sports, athletes, venues, Olympic Village) with concrete expectations
- Olympic software has been implemented to evaluate the candidate cities files
- CEP: no instruction or concrete expectation how to do it
- During evaluation of the candidature files no weight given to CEP
- Also no weight given to peace education

(Ivan 2008, Ivan & Fay 2009)
YOG CEP Singapore 2010 (cont):

- **Twinning school projects** between Singapore schools with around the world
- **The Million Deeds Challenge**: to persuade individuals to do a kind deed for someone, has gone online to reach a global audience
- **The International Friendship Camp** in December 2009 was attended by 200 youth from around the world
- **The Young Reporters Camp** was attended by about 30 youth reporters from around the world
- The appointment of 30 **Global YOG Young Ambassadors** by the IOC to help promote the CEP to their respective YOG athletes back home
- **The Singapore Olympic Foundation** provides educational scholarships to outstanding young athletes to study at the Singapore Sport School for four to six years (tuition is $25,000/year for foreigner students) The competition is open to all 205 NOCs.
- Each of **the 5 continents** appoints a singer to sing the YOG theme song at the Opening ceremony
Apathy about Nanjing 2014

“We, Chinese, have Games fatigue and I don’t think most people in my city are positive about hosting the 2014 Youth Olympic Games. It will showcase of course our outstanding young Olympic athletes and for this we are very proud.”

Quote from Jin Ding, graduate student in International Sport Management, SUNY Cortland
Some Conclusions

• CEP of the YOG faces the pedagogical challenges of Olympic education
• IOC’s Ambassadors are athletes => role models ?
• Each host creates its own major themes, activities in relation to CEP
• How to structure the CEP in overall context of the YOG?

• Innsbruck (2012) 1st Winter YOG, Nanjing (2014) 2nd Summer YOG, Lillehammer 2016 2nd Winter YOG already selected – no weight to CEP in evaluations

• Successful athletic competition
• But HOW to achieve the stated goals of the YOG – CEP program?
• HOW to best structure the CEP activities – through a competition Games structure (e.g., YOG) or through a Youth Olympic Academy model instead?
Need for Future Research

• Need for more systematic research on and evaluation of the YOG CEP is necessary
• Compare and contrast the YOG - CEP with Olympic and peace education programs
• Analyze the results of YOG - CEP of forthcoming YOGs through introduction of indicators for measurements
Ultimately will the Youth Olympic Games be judged to be a creditable new mega-event

or

Rogge’s Folly
THANK YOU
Fielen Dank!