

UNIVERSITY OF PELOPONNESE, DEPARTMENT OF SPORT MANAGEMENT,
SPARTA, GREECE

OLYMPIC EDUCATION IN ALL GREEK SCHOOLS: ADOPTION AND ABANDONMENT

COSTAS MOUNTAKIS

ABSTRACT

Prior to the Olympic Games of 2004, Greece incorporated Olympic Education into the curriculum of its national educational system for one session per week in every grade from the ages of 6 to 18. The main forces behind this were: the International Olympic Academy, the International Foundation of Athletic and Sports Education, the Pedagogical Institute of Greece, the Ministry of National Education and Religious Affairs, and the Organizing Committee of the Olympic Games ‘Athens 2004’.

Their main activity was in producing a programme of teaching materials, and the centralized nature of the educational system enabled the programme to be introduced in a very short time. The programme continued to be implemented in schools after the Olympic Games in the primary sector, and also as an option at the secondary level, under the name of ‘Kallipatira’. The programme lasted after the Olympic Games and up to the 2007–2008 school year. During the 2008–2009 school year, however, it was removed from the curriculum. This paper presents an account of the way in which the programme was introduced into schools, which may be used as a model or guide for any other country organizing the Olympic Games.

Keywords: Olympic Games; Athens 2004; school curriculum

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INTRODUCTION

From the revival of the modern Olympic Games in 1896 it was considered by educationists and the general public alike that, apart from the benefits deriving from competition, records, strong and healthy bodies, and so on, the Games carried certain educational values. Those values could educate the general public in a way, socially acceptable by European countries, which shared more or less a common past and common social values, influenced in important ways by ancient Greek philosophy and Christianity.

If, however, one wants to find a starting point for the introduction of Olympic Education into schools one should not go as far back as to the revival of the modern Olympic Games, but to the establishment of the International Olympic Academy (IOA) in Greece on 14th June 1961. During this decade, one of the main concerns of participants in the sessions was the ideological orientation of the Games – that is the values and principles of Olympism. At those sessions many educationists from different countries and different disciplines, such as history, philosophy, the arts, physical education, etc., expressed their thoughts and ideas and made proposals which are the basis of what we call today Olympic Education. The thoughts and ideas of those people were primarily influenced by the writings of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of modern Olympic Games (Georgiadis, Liombi, & Makris, 2007, p. 32).

During the middle 1970s, at the 16th session of the IOA, Norbert Müller (1976, p. 95) introduced for the first time the term ‘Olympic Education’, for what up to then had been known as ‘athletic education’, ‘physical education’ or ‘body education’. At the same time the question of the inclusion of Olympic Education in the school curricula of all countries and at all levels of education was raised. The need for teachers to be suitably prepared in order to be able to teach such programmes was also stressed (Karatassakis, 1978, pp. 123–136). It was also in this decade that the results of the implementation of such a programme in Quebec in Canada, before the Olympic Games of Montreal in 1976, was reported, and it was suggested that similar programmes be implemented in various countries around the world (Landry, 1980, pp. 287–298).

During the third decade of the IOA (1980–1989) prominent educationists such as Nissiotis from Greece and Zerguini from Algeria tried to give a definition to Olympic Education. Nissiotis, at the 20th session, considered that: “Olympic Education should not concentrate in preventing or correcting abuses only. This would have been only its defensive function. Its work must be more a constructive one, by trying to influence, by means of the Olympic principles and ideals, the large masses of young people or educators of all professions and social classes” (Nissiotis, 1980, p. 41).

As is obvious from the above account, Nissiotis raised two points. One is the negative elements of the Olympic Games, and the role that Olympic Education has to play in facing and coping with those problems. The other point stresses the problems of society, and the impact that Olympic Education can have in influencing the mass of youth of all social classes, and teachers of every subject. Zerguini, at the IOA 7th Session for Educators in 1986, gave a definition which emphasised its positive features:

Olympic Education is the sum of the different methods and actions by the use of which the body, mind and the soul can be educated to create an integrated and balanced person. At the same time Olympic Education is the main force of the International Olympic Committee for the popularisation of sports, the dissemination of Olympic ideals and the preservation of the principles and unity of the Olympic Movement (Zerguini, 1986, pp. 1–2).

Professor Zerguini considers Olympic Education as having two missions, one aiming at the individual person, and how to improve him by influencing his body, soul and mind; and the other concerned with the power of the Olympic ideals and how Olympic Education

could help the International Olympic Committee to make sports more popular around the world.

During the 1990s, Olympic Education curricula were presented at sessions of the International Olympic Academy, which had been implemented in the summer and winter Olympic Games, along with the pedagogical materials, which were used for the implementation of those curricula (Binder, 1995, pp. 65–73). In 1990, Müller presented an Olympic Education curriculum and argued that, in order for such a curriculum to be implemented successfully, it had to take into consideration the difference in age of the pupils, the athletic tradition of each country, the existing school curricula and the feasibility of familiarising Physical Education (PE) teachers with the Olympic Curriculum (Müller, 1990, pp. 1–6). The problem of the implementation of Olympic education into formal education is still under consideration up to the present day (Hadjistephanou, Pigozzi, & McNamee, 2012; Martinková, 2012).

It was also stressed in those sessions that Olympic Education and the impact of Olympic values on the young generation were the only means of combating the present crisis of Olympism. The need to retrain teachers to teach Olympic Education was also frequently mentioned. Other participants in the sessions stressed the need for Olympic Education to be given priority, and to be implemented in schools even after the end of the Olympic Games (Brownlee, 2000, pp. 72–78; Rodichenko, 2000, pp. 98–103). In short it can be said that:

1. During the 1960's the pedagogical value of Olympism was stressed right from the first sessions of the IOA.
2. The early discussions about Olympic Education were influenced by the ideas of the Baron Pierre De Coubertin.
3. In the 1980s Olympic Education programmes were presented at the IOA, which were actually implemented in countries which organised the Olympic Games.
4. In the 1990s Olympic Education became an inextricable part of the Olympic Games. It was a requirement of each country Organising Committee for the Olympic Games (COG) should prepare and implement Olympic Education programmes in schools, and produce teaching materials (Georgiadis et al., 2007, p. 32).

The International Foundation of Olympic and Sport Education (IFOSE)

Another significant institution, which perhaps made the greatest impact on the introduction of Olympic Education in Greek schools, was the International Foundation of Olympic and Sports Education (IFOSE, 2009), with its founder, Antonios Tzikas.

Tzikas was a former president of the Greek Olympic Committee who had played an active role in athletics in Greece, and retired in 1996. As a practical man he believed that the theoretical discussions at the IOA were not enough, and that more action was needed. So when he retired as President of the Greek Olympic Committee, he decided to devote the rest of his life to spreading to the world the educational values of the Olympic Games. So in 1998 he created the International Foundation of Olympic and Sports Education.

During the 1990s, IFOSE organised three international seminars in Greece, at which prominent educationists from all over the world participated in discussing means of implementation of Olympic Education curricula in schools. Most of those educationists were

those who had taken part in the sessions of the IOA during the previous decades. So one can say that there was a continuity between the views of participants in the IFOSE seminars and participants at those seminal IOA sessions of the previous decades. The IFOSE seminars were held in ancient Olympia (13–15th September, 1996), Naousa (27–30th January, 1997) and Kalabrita (20–25th August, 1998).

Perhaps the most important of those seminars was the one held in Kalabrita, in which it was decided to ask the Greek authorities (i.e. the Pedagogical Institute and the Ministry of Education) to implement a pilot programme concerning Olympic Education in Greek schools (IFOSE, 1998). The aim of the programme would be ‘to study the impact of Olympic values on the social behaviour of school children’. The timing of such a decision was felicitous, because it was just one year after Greece had assumed the responsibility (in September 1997) of staging the Games of the XXVIII Olympiad, and the ground was fertile for such initiatives.

In the autumn of 1998 the president of IFOSE, Mr. Tzikas, along with the senior consultant of the Pedagogical Institute responsible for Physical Education, Dr. Mountakis, visited the President of the Pedagogical Institute of Greece to discuss the possibility of conducting a pilot Olympic Education Programme in a number of primary schools that year. *This proposal, which was accepted, can be considered as the starting point of Olympic Education in Greece.* It was good timing, because that year the Pedagogical Institute had planned to introduce 30 pilot programmes in schools financed by the European Community Second framework of social support. The cost of each programme was not to exceed 30 million drachmas (about 90,000 Euros). The title of the programme was decided as ‘The Introduction of Olympic Education in Schools’, and it was to be introduced in the last grade (year 12) of 30 elementary schools. The programme proved to be very successful, as was shown by its evaluation (Kabitsis, Harahousou, Arvaniti, & Mountakis, 2002, pp. 184–192).

The expansion of the programme

Because of the success of the programme, the Ministry of Education decided to make a limited expansion the following year, 1999–2000, rolling the programme out to 10% of the elementary schools (about 400) in the three final grades. The following school year, 2000, was maybe the most decisive for Olympic Education. It was the year when the Ministry of Education of Greece signed a ‘memorandum of understanding’ with the OCOG ‘Athens 2004’, which designated the duties of the Ministry of Education to the OCOG. The draft of the memorandum was prepared at the Pedagogical Institute by the same people who were involved with the pilot Olympic Education programme. If the memorandum had been drafted by any other group of people, the future of Olympic Education in Greece would have been very different. The first item in the memorandum was the obligation of the Ministry of Education to employ 2,000 PE specialists in order for Olympic Education to be introduced to every school and every grade for one session per week. According to the memorandum, over the school year 2000–2001, the programme would be expanded to about half of the schools in the country at the elementary and secondary level. In 2001–2002 the programme was expanded to cover all state schools in the country. In 2002–2003 the programme was extended even further, to include private schools and Greek schools abroad.

One main reason for the rapid expansion of the programme was the very centralised nature of the Greek educational system, which demands that the same curriculum be followed in every school, and also the obligation of each school to comply with the directives of the Ministry of Education. However, two main issues had to be settled before the expansion of the pilot programme: a) the number of periods per week the programme would be implemented in each grade, b) whether the teachers delivering the programme were to be general teachers, or only PE graduates. With regard to the first question it was decided to implement the programme for one session per week in every grade at elementary and secondary level (i.e. from age six up to the age of eighteen). In that way there would be no pupil in the country who had not been introduced to Olympic Education before the staging of the Games. On the second question, different opinions were presented at the discussions between the Pedagogical Institute, 'Athens 2004' and the Ministry of Education.

Finally the decision was in favour of the PE graduates because:

1. They were much closer to Olympic Education because of their studies and because of their experience as athletes. Most of them had experienced the values of Olympic Education better than any other teacher, and it was easier for them to teach them to the pupils.

2. It would be much easier to retrain the 2,000 PE graduates who would be working full-time (i.e. about 20 sessions per week). The alternative would be to retrain many thousands of teachers to teach Olympic Education as part of their timetable, for 2 or 3 sessions per week.

3. The failure or the success of the programme would depend on those 2,000 PE graduates, which would be a great responsibility for them. But, if it was spread over the whole teaching profession, nobody would assume ultimate responsibility.

The Minister of Education promised that, if the programme was successful, those 2,000 PE graduates would find a permanent job in the schools after the Olympic Games ended. Judging that decision in favour of the PE graduates, with the benefit of hindsight, we think it can be said that the success of the programme and the great momentum for its continuance was due to the decision to employ only PE graduates, because: a) they worked hard and with great enthusiasm because they had the responsibility for the success of the programme and b) they exerted pressure on the government after the Olympic Games to keep the promise to appoint them permanently in the schools in order to continue implementing the programme.

How important the Greek state considered the Olympic Education programme to be is obvious from the following actions:

1. 2,000 PE specialists were appointed in order to implement the programme, and a special law was passed in parliament to allow for their employment.
2. A vice-minister was appointed at the Ministry of Education to take political responsibility for the programme, and a special office (the Olympic Education Office) was created at the Ministry of Education to co-ordinate the programme all over the country.
3. A senior PE teacher was appointed in every prefecture to co-ordinate the implementation of the programme in that prefecture (about 64 teachers).
4. Resources were allocated to every prefecture in order for special projects to be created concerning Olympic Education.
5. 180,000,000 drachmas (about 550,000 euros) was given for seminars on the retraining of the PE graduates to implement the programme.

6. The OCOG 'Athens 2004' created a special office to support the programme, and also created teaching materials.

7. 17 books were written, along with other materials, in order to support the programme. Most of the people involved in the above process in administrative positions were those who implemented the joint pilot programme of the Pedagogical Institute and the IFOSE. This accounts for the harmonious development of the philosophy and the general principles underlying the programme.

It can be said in synopsis that there were five forces behind the introduction of Olympic Education in Greek schools.

- a) The International Olympic Academy, which created the philosophical foundation and paved the way for Olympic Education,
- b) The International Foundation of Olympic and Sport Education, and its founder Mr. Tzikas,
- c) The Pedagogical Institute of Greece, which actually implemented the Olympic Education programme, drafted the memorandum of understanding and made all the positive proposals to the Ministry of Education,
- d) The Ministry of Education, which decided to implement the programme in every school,
- e) The Organising Committee of the Olympic Games 'Athens 2004', which contributed very significantly to the production of teaching materials (Georgiadis, 2005, pp. 115–135).

Creation of the pilot programme

As was mentioned earlier, the pilot programme was the main force behind the implementation of Olympic Education in Greek schools, because all subsequent decisions on issues concerning the expansion of the programme were based on the pilot programme. This programme may be used as a guide for any other country wanting to introduce Olympic Education into its schools, and that is why it is very briefly presented below.

An invitation was sent to elementary schools all over the country and, from those who showed an interest in participating, 30 schools were chosen using the stratified technique (Cohen & Holliday, 1979, p. 104). That is, the schools represented urban and rural areas, mainland and islands, north and south of the country. Two schools were also selected at random in order to be used as the control group for evaluation purposes. The main limiting factor in choosing only 30 schools was the financing of the programme provided by the Pedagogical Institute. It was decided to use one teaching period per week of 45 minutes, and the teachers used were 25 PE specialists and 5 elementary school teachers. Before the commencement of the programme the teachers were called to Athens to attend a two-day seminar organised by the Pedagogical Institute, with lectures concerning the values and principles of Olympic Education, the content of the programme, teaching methods and evaluation of the programme. The values and principles were those discussed in the IOA and in the seminars organized by IFOSE. The programme started a little late that year, in January 1998.

The Department of Physical Education and Sports Science at the University of Thrace assumed the responsibility of evaluating the programme. The programme was very

successful, even though it lasted only five months (from January 1999 to May 1999). Nearly all the indicators concerning the social behaviour of the pupils showed some improvement. 'Based on the results of this study the conclusion drawn was that the implementation of Olympic Culture in the school curriculum in Greece had a beneficial effect' (Kabitsis et al., 2002, pp. 184–192). The teaching materials used for the implementation of the programme consisted mainly of a book created by the IFOSE called 'Guide to Olympic and Athletic Education' (Mouratidis, Kabitsis, Mountakis, & Mastora, 1998).

The first problem encountered by any educationist who wants to turn a good idea into a sound pedagogical programme is what steps have to be taken in order for the idea to be transformed into a practical plan suitable for introduction into schools. Curriculum planning theorists recommend four steps in planning:

1. Aim and objectives (Values and Principles),
2. Content,
3. Method,
4. Evaluation (Tyler, 1949, p. 1; Wheeler, 1967, pp. 30–31; Mountakis, 1989).

AIM AND OBJECTIVES (VALUES AND PRINCIPLES)

The first question concerns the aims, values, principles and objectives of Olympic Education. This is perhaps the most controversial question of all because of its philosophical nature. The following definition of Olympic Education was given by the Pedagogical Institute and by Athens 2004:

Olympic Education is a pedagogical programme which comprises knowledge, skills, experiences and values which spring from the Olympic Games and the athletic tradition, and taking into consideration elements of contemporary reality, aims at changing the behaviour of the pupils in a socially desirable direction.

We may note that the above definition suggests that every issue of the Olympic Games (or of sports in general) has to be interpreted according to contemporary reality. For example, the problem of amateurism has to be faced according to this criterion – for today and in the near future, many of the top athletes in the most popular Olympic sports are going to be professionals.

Olympic Education, as defined above, is a programme and not a school subject. There are some basic differences between a programme and a school subject. A school subject (e.g. mathematics, geography or history) springs from a particular discipline, which has specific characteristics. On the other hand, a programme does not spring from a specific science, but rather from a particular focus, consisting of specific actions – activities deriving from various disciplines. For example, in the Olympic Education programme, an action may spring from history. The pupils are asked to find the similarities and differences between the modern and ancient Olympic Games. Another action may come from the arts lesson, where the pupils are asked to evaluate posters of the modern Olympic Games. Another action may spring from PE, in which the pupils are asked to organize a championship in soccer, where the winner would not be the side that scored the more goals but the one that made the fewer fouls.

The second, more difficult, question is what the values of Olympic Education are. It seems that there is more controversy here than in its definition. It can be said that there is a tendency by some people involved with Olympic Education to include in the term Olympic Education all the socially desirable values of modern times. One of the most controversial values which some educationists tend to include within Olympic Education values is ecological consciousness. But since ecological issues are only recently being considered, it is doubtful that they are a core Olympic concern. On the contrary, it may be argued that the opposite happens, in that the Olympic Games tend to contribute to the destruction of the environment. Where the Olympic Games are staged, the environment tends to be destroyed to a lesser or greater extent in order for huge new athletic facilities to be constructed. To put it differently, if we want to preserve the environment, we should stop making huge athletic facilities – but this might lead to the Games' decline. Regarding the Winter Games, the protest has been especially intense (see Da Costa 1997, p. 101). So it is not surprising that it is ecological organizations that have been prominent in opposition to the staging of the Olympic Games, together with political parties more closely associated with ecological organizations.

Now, if we agree that Olympic values have to derive from the Olympic Games and the athletic tradition, and not from other institutions, as it is stated in the definition, the next question is about which Olympic Games one is talking about. Historians of the Olympic Games tend to suggest that if somebody wants to look for values he should divide the Olympic Games into three periods:

1. The ancient period, which coincides with the ancient Greek civilization and its values.
2. The revival period and the beginning of the 20th century, influenced by the ideals of Pierre de Coubertin and Victorian athleticism in British public schools.
3. The modern period, stemming from contemporary values.

(Parry, 1988, pp. 81–94; Young, 1988, p. 27; Seagraves & Chu, 1988, pp. 149–150.)

Modern historians agree that there are essential differences between those three periods (Parry, 1988, pp. 81–94). In order to understand this point, two examples will be given. One has to do with amateurism and the other with the participation of women in the Games.

Amateurism did not seem to exist as a term in ancient Greece. Athens and Sparta, which mainly represented ancient Greece, were societies with free citizens and slaves. The free citizens followed no particular profession, but only the skills of war. However, in the revival period, the ideal of amateurism was prominent. Professionals were not allowed to take part in the Games and examples exist of great athletes who were deprived of their Olympic medal because they were accused of being professionals after the end of the Games. And in the modern period, especially in the major Olympic sports, the ideal is in decline. To put it another way, if today a country organising the Olympic Games invited only amateurs to take part, there would be no real Olympic Games.

The other example concerns the participation of women in the Games. In the ancient Olympic Games women were not only banned from participating but even from being present in the stadium as spectators (Giatsis, 1985). In the revival period, the situation was not much better, since in the first Olympic Games no women took part. From the beginning of the 20th century until today there has been a steady growth in the participation of women, with a gradual move towards fully equal participation. In conclusion, it can be

said that the value of gender equality existed neither in ancient times nor in the first revival Olympiad, but that today it is steadily gaining ground. To put it another way, if women were excluded from the Games today, the Games would decline.

From what has already been said it can be concluded that the values associated with the Olympic Games and sports in general, though few in the number, are very important in distinguishing Olympic Education from other systems.

Values associated with the ancient Olympic Games

Maybe the most lasting and least disputed value of those associated with the Olympic Games is that of excellence. For a person to want to improve himself at all times, to be better, to be the first, using the same means as the others and under the same conditions, is a value associated with sports from the moment of their first appearance, and is likely to remain the same in the future. Without this value of excellence sports could not exist.

Fair play is the next value associated with the Olympic Games. This value can be seen from two sides. The first is the obligation of the athlete to comply with the rules – every contestant has to respect the rules, otherwise the contest cannot run smoothly. But the most valuable side of fair play has to do with the unwritten obligation of the contestants to share the same conditions during the contest.

The third value associated with the Olympic Games, both ancient and modern, closely connected to fairness, is that of justice. It would be difficult for the Olympic Games to have this lasting success or even to survive for just a few years if the contestants were not imbued with this sense of justice. This may seem a little strange to us in our contemporary world, without slaves and with formal justice. But we can imagine what it was like in ancient times, when wealthy people, and even kings, were taking part in the Games – people who saw themselves as being better than ordinary people, and often saw themselves as above the law. In the athletics arena, however, the rules were the same for everybody. The Olympic Games and sports in general have contributed to the promotion of equity, and a wider sense of social justice.

Peace is the next and maybe the most controversial value associated with the Olympic Games. The question here is whether the Olympic Games actually do contribute to world peace. The answer is not as easy as it looks. It is known that in the ancient times the Greeks had institutionalized the truce in order for the Games to run smoothly. In modern times things are more difficult, since truce is not established, so war continues in several parts of the globe even during the Olympic Games. So why is peace still considered to be an Olympic value? We think for two reasons: firstly, because if the wealthy countries are at war the Olympic Games cannot be staged, and this happened in three Olympiads in modern times – 1916, 1940 and 1944, when the Games were to be staged in Berlin, Tokyo and London respectively; and secondly, when the poor countries are at war there are no resources left, or the appropriate infrastructure in the country, for the maintenance of athletic facilities to train athletes, organize games, or even send athletes to the Olympic Games.

Finally, we should mention health as a value often associated with sport and the Olympic Games, ancient and modern. In order to reach his top performance an athlete must be healthy, and the training of the athlete contributes to his health. Despite this, however,

a number of points should be raised here. Firstly, we have to ask what is meant by the term ‘health’, since there are athletes who achieved world victories while suffering from fatal diseases. Secondly, heavy training and tough competition might well have detrimental effects on the athlete in the short or long term. Thirdly, the strong desire to win may drive someone to use forbidden drugs, which may have detrimental health effects. However, despite the above points, we accept that sports in general contribute to a healthy organism, and that the health benefits of sport are often cited as a reason against doping.

The above-mentioned five values – of excellence, fair play, justice, peace and health – are the most lasting sporting values, stretching through the whole spectrum of from ancient times, the beginning of the 20th century right up to our present times.

Values associated with the modern Olympic Games

One value which nobody seems to dispute today but which did not exist in ancient times (although it is closely related to one conception of justice) is that of equality of opportunity: the same right for everybody to participate. Today it is accepted that anybody – regardless of origin, nationality, ethnicity, religion, ideology or gender – has the same right to take part in the Games. Despite the tremendous differences that exist in the world today (for example, in some countries, women are not allowed to participate) the Games are open to them. This value simply did not exist in ancient times, when only free male Greek citizens were allowed to participate.

A second value associated with the modern Olympic Games is that of understanding and respect which can be seen from two sides: understanding and respect between countries, and understanding and respect between athletes. If we take into account the huge political, social and economic differences between various nations, and the hostility that exists between some of them, there has to be a great deal of tolerance from the political and athletic authorities of each country in order to agree to mutually accepted rules so that the Games can proceed and retain their global international character. The other side of understanding is that between the athletes, coaches, officials, organisers and administrators from so many different countries. A high degree of understanding and respect is needed by everybody in order for the Games to run smoothly.

A third value associated with the modern Olympic Games is that of participation. Even though winning is what every athlete is looking for, only one individual or team can win. However, it cannot be true that the athletes who do not win a medal can therefore find no value in the Games. Simple participation is cherished as a great honour – the pinnacle of some athletes’ careers. And, of course, without many “unrewarded” participants, there could be no winners. Unfortunately this value did not exist in the ancient Olympic Games where only victory had value. According to some reports, the shamefaced loser at the ancient Games tried to sneak back into his country or city by back roads in order to avoid being seen (Paulinis, 1928, sec. 26). In our days, if athletes ceased to consider participation to be as important as victory, the Games would go into decline.

In summary, we can suggest that the above are the main values that every Olympic Education programme should highlight and foster: excellence, fair play, justice, peace, health, equality of opportunity, understanding and respect, and the value of participation as well as victory. Although there might remain some controversy about these values

and their justification, it was considered that these eight values command widespread assent. These guiding values are what distinguishes an Olympic Education programme from any other programme (such as religious or political), which also claims to foster social values.

Objectives

After the question of values was settled, more precise objectives were set. These were divided into four areas:

1. Attitudes (towards ancient Greek tradition, the body, participation, nature, etc.).
2. Social Skills (communication with fellow athletes, officials, contestants, media, etc.).
3. Psychomotor skills (development of specific athletic skills, particularly in those athletic events that were not widespread in Greece).
4. Cognitive skills (knowledge about Olympic tradition, Olympic values, about art springing from the Olympic Games, human rights, etc.).

Content

The content chosen in order for the values and objectives to be realised was divided into two main parts, theoretical and practical.

Theoretical Content

The theoretical content included activities concerning:

1. The early forms of athletics (before the commencement of the ancient Olympic Games).
2. Athletics in ancient Greece.
3. Athletics in the Roman and Byzantine Empires and in Modern Greek times.
4. Historical sources from foreign travellers and archaeologists who discovered and described archaeological sites in Greece.
5. The forerunner Olympic Games (attempts to revive the Olympic Games in Greece and abroad before 1896).
6. The modern Olympic Games (from 1896 until today).
7. The Olympic Games of Athens 2004.

Practical Content

Indoor activities

1. Creation of projects.
2. IT skills (contribution to school website, etc.).
3. Athletic activities (intra-school competition, etc.).
4. Artistic activities (wall-painting, photography, dance, etc.).
5. Theatrical activities (drama, improvisation, etc.).
6. Musical activities (choirs, etc.).
7. Literature and poetry (writing of poems, prose).
8. Others.

Outdoor activities

1. Visits to athletic venues, local and national.
2. Visits to archaeological sites related to athletics, ancient and modern.
3. Visits to museums.
4. Visits to cultural centres (theatres, exhibitions, etc.).
5. Visits to athletic and cultural clubs.
6. Visits to libraries, educational institutions, multi media centres, etc.
7. Participation in municipal and (if possible) national events, as volunteers, etc.

Method of delivering the content

Apart from the traditional methods of teaching (presenting, use of slides, video tapes, etc.) more pupil-centred methods were also used. Those methods are not clearly defined, but they are active, co-operative, and interdisciplinary. The pupils, along with the teacher, decide what to do. They do research, make observations, take initiatives, etc.

Evaluation

Even though the programme was a new one and encountered certain difficulties in its implementation (the most important of which was that some of the projects were insufficiently completed), the evaluation showed positive tendencies in most of the variables under investigation. This was due not only to the content and teaching methods but also to the enthusiasm of the teachers who conducted the programme.

The evaluation was performed with the pre- and post-test methods. Statistical tests, such as frequencies, chi-square, t-test for paired and independent groups, one-way ANOVA and the Scheffe test were used for the analysis of the data. The detailed results, which have been published elsewhere, are presented briefly below and show that:

- a) pupils' knowledge of the Olympic Games improved greatly,
- b) pupils' attitudes were positively affected toward the benefits of exercise,
- c) pupils' level of sportsmanship was increased,
- d) pupils' attitudes were positively affected towards fair play.

The results also showed that:

- e) the beneficial affect of the programme's implementation was stronger in girls than boys,
- f) the level of education of the children's parents was one of the most important factors determining their attitudes towards sportsmanship and fair play (Kabitsis et al., 2002).

The final project of each school was sent to the Pedagogical Institute for evaluation and for inclusion in a book, which was used in subsequent years for the implementation of the Olympic Education programme throughout the country (Pedagogical Institute, 2002).

The cooperation of the teachers who implemented the programme with head teachers, the local authorities, their fellow teachers and children's parents, was crucial for success. With the establishment of this cooperation, another essential objective of the programme was accomplished, which was the creation of better links between schools and local communities. The programme also contributed toward improving cooperation between the Pedagogical Institute, the IFOSE and the schools that implemented it.

The programme after the Olympic Games

As was mentioned previously, the promise of the Minister of Education was that if the programme was successful it would continue in the post-Olympic era. Even though the government changed just before the Olympic Games the promise was kept by the new government, although with some revisions. The main problem encountered by the Ministry of Education in the post-Olympic era was in finding the money to support the programme. As was mentioned, 2,000 PE graduates were employed in order for the programme to be implemented – but their contracts expired after the Olympic Games.

The money was finally found from a programme financed by the European Community, called ‘training and initial vocational rehabilitation for women’ – but some restrictions were imposed. The first was that the name of the programme should be a female one and the second that the content had to be developed around certain areas. In order to meet the first demand the programme was renamed as ‘Kalipatira’. Kalipatira was the woman who in ancient times entered the stadium in Olympia disguised as a man in order to watch her son competing there. When her son won the event she ran into the Olympic stadium in order to embrace him. But her clothes fell away and it was discovered that she was a woman. Because it was not permitted for women to attend the Games she was arrested and sentenced to death. But when she said to the judges that her son, three of her brothers, one of her nephews and her father were Olympic winners, the judges cleared her and let her live. It can be said that the name was quite appropriate, and it was a good link between Olympic Education and the new programme.

According to the second demand, the programme had to include themes concerning the equality of the sexes, human rights, multiculturalism, the fight against racism, etc. But all the above were included in the initial content of Olympic Education. So no harm was actually done to the content of Olympic Education, apart from losing its name. One way or another the content of Olympic Education had to change in the post-Olympic era in Greece, anyway. Most of the previous content was focused on the Olympic Games of 2004, and that had to be modified in the light of experience, while other issues might be included or highlighted.

The ‘Office of Olympic Education’ took the following actions over a three-year period (2005–2008) in order to support the programme.

1. The programme continued in all schools at elementary level for one session per week in the four upper grades.
2. In high schools (13–15 years) the programme was offered as an option for the pupils, on condition that there were PE teachers specially trained to teach it.
3. In the autumn of the 2006–2007 school year, 1,600 PE teachers, mainly those who were working in Olympic Education, attended a five-day seminar of eight sessions per day in order to be more familiar with the new demands of the programme.
4. 1,500 projects were financed in schools in the year 2007–2008, with 4,000 euros each.
5. There was one senior PE teacher responsible in each prefecture for the coordination of the programme – i.e. 64 PE teachers all over the country.
6. Four new books were written as part of the programme, one for the teachers and three for the pupils.

The end of the programme

Even though there was moderate optimism that the programme would remain as part of the curriculum, most probably at the primary level, in the three upper grades for one session per week, suddenly at the beginning of the school year 2008–2009 the Ministry of Education removed it from the school curriculum, after appointing all the graduates who had been involved with Olympic education as physical education teachers in the schools in permanent positions. Since, as was mentioned earlier, the system in Greece is very centralized, all schools had to follow that directive. Even though no official explanation was given as to why the programme was removed, four reasons may be given:

- a) lack of funding,
- b) lack of political will,
- c) lack of pressure from those teachers who had implemented the programme, after they were given permanent jobs,
- d) lack of pressure from the wider public, because, in the post-Olympic era, there was widespread public opinion that Greece had spent a lot of money on the Games, and there was little appetite for spending any more.

In our view, both during and after the present serious financial crisis, there is no likelihood of reviving the programme.

AFTERWORD

If a future historian were to be asked, ‘What did the Greeks do that was different or important when they staged the 2004 Olympic Games?’ the answer would be ‘The introduction of Olympic Education into all schools of the country from the age of 6 up to the age of 18 for one session per week’. All the other things which today are considered by many as very important, like the modern stadium, the unique roof of Kalatrava, the new high speed roads, the new airport, the opening and closing ceremonies – all these things will be forgotten with the passing of time, because they will be repeated and even improved by other countries staging the Olympic Games in the future. Indeed, the efforts of Beijing for 2008 already completely dwarfed all previous achievements in this regard.

However, the introduction of Olympic Education to the whole of the educational system was a first for Greece, and one of the main achievements of the Olympic Games. Its abandonment was both disheartening and regrettable for all those who, alongside the athletes, had striven to achieve success and a permanent legacy.

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Costas Mountakis
mountakis2@hol.gr