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*« Olympic Pedagogy as a Theory of Development of
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Olympic pedagogy: what did it mean to Pierre de Coubertin?

Today, there is neither a common definition nor an international standard article that precisely describes all aspects of the term and all facets of the objective of Olympic pedagogy. Even the term “Olympic pedagogy” is not commonly used by scholars and scientists as a global term in the same way as, for instance, “Olympic education” (cf. Binder, 2001). Whereas Olympic education describes teaching and learning about the Olympic spirit and Olympic ideals, Olympic pedagogy, in German-speaking countries at least, is understood as the theory – or at least as the philosophical-pedagogical background – of Olympic education for the purposes of learning physical, social, ethical and humanistic values and virtues in sport activities.

In certain respects we may assume today that Olympic pedagogy is somewhat like a theoretical or philosophical foundation for the aims and objectives of Olympic education. However, this assumption is not identical to the understanding of Olympic pedagogy in the writings of Pierre de Coubertin.

In his Olympic letter No. V, published in the Lausanne newspaper “La Gazette” in November 1918, Coubertin wrote: “This Olympic pedagogy which I recently said was based at once on the cult of effort combined on the cult of eurhythmia – and consequently on the love of excess combined with the love of moderation – is not sufficiently served by being glorified before the world once every four years in the Olympic Games. It needs permanent factories. The Olympic factory for the ancient world was the gymnasium. The Olympiads have been renewed, but the gymnasium of antiquity has not – as yet. It must be” (Coubertin, 2000, p.217). One can discuss whether the term “factory” is really appropriate for characterising an institution of education. But Coubertin was not thinking of real factories, just as the ancient gymnasium was not merely a factory for bodywork. Coubertin was thinking of new permanent places of education and exercise beside the Olympic Games to propagate the cult of effort and the cult of eurhythmia to young people. In this Olympic letter he mentions “municipal institutions”, which “are going to play the foremost part in the world to come” (ibid) after World War I. And indeed, in the 1920s, in many European countries, schools and sports clubs became “permanent factories” for physical activities and sport education, which, since then, have at least been spreading the cult of effort.

Effort as a fundamental Olympic principle, which today is better expressed as “joy found in effort”, and the principle of eurhythmia have indeed become two essential pillars of Olympic education. But the term Olympic pedagogy implies more educational tasks than just these two pillars.

Coubertin himself did not develop any system or further outline of what Olympic pedagogy meant to him. In the 1920s he more frequently used the term “pédagogie sportive”, which is the title of his famous book on physical education (1922). It is apparent that he used the terminology of “sport pedagogy” more after 1925 when he resigned from his IOC Presidency at the Olympic Congress in the city of Prague. But why did he not elaborate a theory or system of Olympic pedagogy? Even the term “Olympic education” was used by him less than “sport education”. This becomes clearer if we look at some of the other Olympic letters he published in the Lausanne newspaper “La Gazette” at the same time – in late 1918 and early 1919.

In letter No. IV we find his famous quote: “Olympism is not a system, it is a state of mind. The most widely divergent approaches can be accommodated in it, and no race or time can

hold an exclusive monopoly on it" (Coubertin, 2000, p.548). If Olympism is not a system of philosophical or pedagogical assumptions, then it is hardly striking that we do not find any theoretically based structure of Olympic pedagogy with Pierre de Coubertin. If Olympism does include divergent approaches, which may also change according to the cultural background as time goes by, then no unique system of Olympic pedagogy can exist without different approaches depending on the culture and the changing periods of societal developments. My interpretation therefore is: because the Olympic movement has changed rapidly during the last twenty years we also need, according to Coubertin, a new foundation for Olympic pedagogy today.

However and nevertheless, Pierre de Coubertin himself left us a number of baselines and essentials for his Olympism and for his vision of education in the spirit of Olympism.

In 1935, two years before Coubertin died, he referred to five principles of Olympism as a philosophical foundation. He alluded to these five principles of Olympism in his famous broadcast speech in 1935 (cf. Coubertin, 1966, pp.150-154 and Coubertin, 2000, pp.580-583).

The first and most essential principle is what he called the "religio-athletae". Pierre de Coubertin assessed the athletes who participate in Olympic Games as "ambassadors of modern education" for the civilised countries who share with each other the religious spirit of sports as a means of moral character building.

The second principle is based on the "equality" of all human beings, as a further development of the mission "citius, altius, fortius" as a means of permanent striving for the individual self-perfection of athletes with the "freedom of excess" and the spirit to beat records.

The third principle is characterised with the term "chivalry", as the behavioural pattern of men who compete against each other like the knights of olden days in the spirit of comradeship. In other parts of his writings Coubertin also used the term "fair play" to explain the meaning of chivalry.

The fourth principle is "truce", with the idea of "rhythm", which implies a specific time frame for the celebration of the Olympic Games, every four years. The idea of rhythm was linked with the desire for truce – to interrupt conflicts between countries and nations so that all athletes might participate in the Olympic Games.

The final fifth principle refers to "beauty", the involvement of art and poetry as an element of the Olympic Games celebrations. This principle reflects Coubertin's vision of eurhythmia as another essential part of a harmonious development in education.

If we summarise these five principles we see that there is no clear system of Olympic pedagogy for Pierre de Coubertin. It is a mixture of the intentions of ethical and humanistic values for the development of Olympic athletes, a code of rules for their participation in the Olympic Games and a number of important elements for the ceremony of the Olympic festival.

Olympic pedagogy as a set of educational aims and objectives for school education

1983, when the IOC executive board decided to promote the foundation of National Olympic Academies, also saw the beginnings of Olympic education projects in many countries. Since that time the term "Olympic education" has become popular, and education programmes have been linked with schools as "factories of Olympism", as Coubertin would say. In most countries the IOC Olympic Charter was selected as the foundation of Olympic education

programmes. There are three “fundamental principles of Olympism” cited in the Olympic Charter, and these paragraphs are frequently chosen to identify the range and the purpose of Olympic education activities (IOC, 2004, p.9):

“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 ethical principles” (§ 1).

“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” (§ 2).

“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” (§ 4).

These paragraphs of the IOC Charter can be characterized as a summary of the “constitutional demands of Olympism”, which of course do not describe a coherent system of Olympic pedagogy but rather the essential tasks for Olympic education programmes.

In Germany, however, the development of Olympic education programmes was closely linked with the writings of Pierre de Coubertin and his successor Carl Diem (1967) on the philosophical and pedagogical foundations of Olympism. To explain and justify the aims and objectives to achieve in Olympic education programmes the German sport pedagogue Ommo Grupe summarised five general principles under the headline of Olympic pedagogy. He has highlighted a couple of times five basic principles of Olympic pedagogy, which are translated here into English (cf. Grupe, 1993; 1997; 2001):

1. the principle of unity of body and soul, aimed at harmonious learning and holistic education;
2. the aim of individual self-fulfillment: “working for sporting perfection” as a “path to a better self”;
3. the ideal of amateurism as “training of virtue by means of worldly asceticism” with the aim of becoming immune to greed and materialism;
4. the ethical rules and principles of honesty and fairness; and
5. the task of promoting mutual respect between people and nations, with the peacemaking idea of the principles of sporting performance and competition (cf. Grupe, 1997, p.223).

To these five principles Norbert Müller (1998, p.393) added a sixth:

“The promotion of emancipatory developments in and through sport...” which include the “acceptance of all different forms of physical activities and competitive sports”.

Of course, these two foundations, the concept of Olympic pedagogy by Grupe and the paragraphs of the IOC Charter for Olympic education do not contradict other; indeed, when we employ the German approach of re-thinking the pedagogical heritage of writings of Pierre de Coubertin and Carl Diem, they overlap. However, both foundations need to be examined theoretically and practically to see whether they are lacking in certain respects in educating young people today, with reference to their current socialization processes into sport, their

present assimilation of the Olympic movement by mass media, and today's aims and tasks of physical education at school.

Four Major Approaches of Teaching Olympic Education

Besides the two main foundations for Olympic education at school, we can identify four major teaching approaches world-wide from a pedagogical perspective (cf. Naul, 2002).

(1) In many countries the most popular and the dominant globally disseminated approach is a **“knowledge based approach”** for teaching Olympic education. Many books, booklets and brochures, mainly published by National Olympic Academies, convey a national and international view on the ancient and modern Olympic Games in terms of names, dates and facts as appropriate for the age of the students. Geographical questions and discourses about Olympic ideals supplement and complement the reproduction of Olympic history as a means of transferring relevant knowledge of Olympism and the Olympic Games.

(2) This approach is very often supplemented by physical and social “Olympic Day Activities”. An **“experience-centred approach”** is linked to promoting meetings of groups of children and young people at sporting and cultural occasions, e.g. in the form of national and international school co-operation ventures, sports days with festivals and rallies, youth camps including special “fair-play campaigns” and get-togethers with students from other countries to learn from each other about the different national cultures. Norbert Müller (1998; 2004) has become a strong supporter of this approach to Olympic education.

(3) A third approach can be identified as a **“motor-skill-based approach”**. This approach is linked with the writings of Rolf Gessmann (2002; 2004) about Olympic education. His definition of Olympic education is this: “Olympic education is a sport-pedagogic doctrine that sees its educational potential in efforts to achieve a high degree of sporting performance for the individual through concentrated and systematic exercise and training” (Gessmann, 2002, p. 16). For Gessmann, individual sporting perfection is the basis for the development of social values, which depends on combative encounters with an opponent. The social potential of Olympic values is fulfilled only in a joint contest for individual perfection. Therefore, the basic pedagogic idea is not to determine which competitor has the better physical performance. This teaching approach is closely connected with an Olympic ideal that the IOC Charter describes as “joy found in effort” and Coubertin's vision of individual self-perfection and personal self-fulfillment of the individual by the “religio-athletae” principle.

(4) A fourth approach of teaching Olympic education has become popular in recent years in Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the USA. This approach can be identified as a **“life-world-centred approach”**, which combines Olympic principles with the children's and young people's social experience in their daily lives. It understands Olympic ideals as a challenge to individual assignments in the overall context of the socialisation of social values for these children and young people's moral behaviour patterns. A typical title of an Olympic education project supporting this teaching approach is “Be a Champion in Life” (Binder, 2000) – and not only in sport. This “life-world-centred” teaching approach has also become the baseline for the new OVED project of the IOC “Olympic Education Toolkit” introduced by Deanna Binder (2006) in Beijing at the 5th Olympic Forum in October 2006.

Re-thinking Olympic pedagogy and Olympic education approaches

The two traditional foundations, the historico-pedagogical foundations of Olympism dating from Coubertin's writings, and the constitutional foundations represented by the fundamental Olympic Principles in the Charter of the IOC, exhibit a number of overlaps. The catalogues of principles underlying these two foundations have a number of things in common, such as their demand for "mutual respect", "fair play" and other values. But the foundations also exhibit two common weaknesses: they both neglect modern characteristics of and current changes to the Olympic movement, and they both postulate their educational tasks without any link to individual educational tasks from the point of view of sport education and movement-socialisation of children and young people in their various spheres of life.

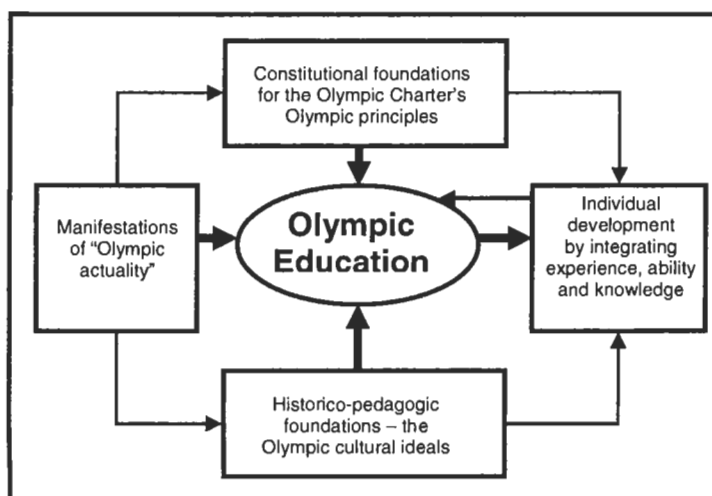
From this point of view, and considering modern manifestations of the Olympic Games movement and the problems currently encountered by children and young people growing up in their various life-worlds, these two traditional foundations no longer offer an adequate basis for formulating an appropriate perspective for Olympic education. For this reason, both of these approaches – Olympic pedagogy as a set of educational tasks, and the fundamental principles stated in the Olympic Charter – need re-evaluation. The relevant questions are: to what extent are the present-day Olympic Games and the current Olympic movement relationships included in educational demands, and to what extent are didactic transformations of Olympic principles into educational tasks represented.

As a consequence of our two criticisms we need to supplement the two traditional foundations with two additional aspects. The first of these takes into account the "manifestations of Olympic actuality", because this relevance is necessary in order to re-legitimise the Olympic movement's historically manifest humanistic and ethical values and may even lend them new accentuation, e.g. such as anti-doping education as an aspect of fair play.

The second supplement should be seen as transforming the constitutional and historico-pedagogic foundations in order to take into account the socio-cultural conditions which children and young people currently undergo, pursue and experience in their daily life and their movement, games and sports, and through which and about which they eventually encounter "their Olympic experiences" in sport activities and in their life-world. (cf. Naul, 2004).

An Olympic education in this sense is understood as an education that goes beyond the school as seat of learning, that depicts the school as just one educational setting among many. For Olympic learning we take the union of the three didactic concepts "experience", "ability" and "knowledge" and integrate them into a global concept: Olympic learning as individual development within and through the individual's life-world settings.

Fig. 1: The integrated didactic approach for Olympic education



Such an outline concept for Olympic learning includes our two supplements to the two traditional foundations and is described as an **integrated didactic concept for Olympic education**, whereby this “integration” is understood in a number of ways:

- As learning at a variety of locations that together embrace school and school sport, life-world and sport club, the world of sport and the Olympic Games as social settings;
- As learning in a number of subject areas at school, their individual didactic approaches being integrated to constitute an integrated Olympic education;
- As learning in the various forms of Olympic education, as the integration of experience, ability and knowledge.

Olympic pedagogy: Olympic learning in four subject areas

Our two supplements to the traditional foundations of Olympic pedagogy constitute an important basis for this integrated didactic approach to Olympic education. The following core educational task for Olympic education can be derived from this:

The integrative development of sporting, social, moral and intellectual education, which promotes individual sporting ability as accomplishment, as competition and as fair play, as a means of developing various positive social experiences and moral value orientations for the individual pupils. Experience of the ethico-moral principles of the Olympic idea in sporting activity, plus knowledge of moral behaviour and knowledge of the values and ideals of the Olympic movement, should enable pupils to experience and learn moral conduct in sport and should also convey knowledge about such conduct and shape their conscience for their daily life.

These two task complexes address standards and values in sport and in children’s and young people’s daily life. As an individual development task, children and young people should come to link *subjective sporting ability, social conduct, moral behaviour and Olympic knowledge* with the *objectively desirable fundamental and historico-pedagogic behavioural standards of the Olympic principles*.

Sporting effort, social conduct, moral behaviour and Olympic knowledge can be considered as four subject areas of an ascending spiral curriculum, i.e. each subject area is equally important, they are mutually dependent and thus complement each other. In this way they together define the integrated approach to Olympic education (cf. Naul, 2004).

Sporting effort defines the starting point for Olympic education in the area of learning motor abilities and sport skills. But sporting perfection for its own sake is not an Olympic learning objective: it aims to promote **social conduct** as a specific behaviour in both sporting encounters and in situations of daily life. Just as sporting perfection is the foundation for promoting social conduct and should be a concomitant of it, so is social conduct a basis or preliminary stage of **moral behaviour** as a general behavioural pattern. We cannot conceive of moral behaviour without a decision for or against something. Moral behaviour as a decision requires a socio-ethical, cognitive substantiation. **Olympic knowledge** is not primarily a question of knowing dates and facts from Olympic history, but of knowing and grasping the significance of the Olympic idea and its ethical standards and humanistic values for one’s

own moral conduct in the face of conflicts or dilemmas. Thus it deals with the individual's own answer to the question of why one should behave fairly and respect otherness.

1. Sporting effort

Sporting effort is the physical subject area in Olympic education. We understand the term "sporting efforts" to mean the development of general basic motor abilities and the promotion of sport skills and techniques. The objective here is to systematically promote these abilities, skills and techniques by means of a continual process of learning and exercise. The schoolchildren should **demonstrate** their individual **motor abilities and sport skills**, which gradually improve as they interact with other boys and girls in shared competition. And over the course of this shared **competition** for the best personal sporting performance, the concept of fair play serves as orientation, in effect as a mutually accepted threshold, ensuring that they always **behave fairly** to the other participants in any sporting competition.

2. Social conduct

Social conduct is a subject area that arises from sporting ability, and which supplements and complements sporting behaviours and orientations in a social context. By **seeking models** we mean seeking "good examples", as the Olympic Charter puts it, i.e. those from whom we can and wish to learn. **Life-long learning** could be described as the core activity that requires individuals to continually strive to perfect their personal skills throughout their life, both in sport and in everyday life. Here, learning is understood as life-long learning en route to personal "self-perfection", as Coubertin formulated the associated educational principle. In this sense, life-long learning as "self-perfection" presupposes the search for a "model", a "good example". In following such an example, we orient ourselves on a standard with which we can declare solidarity. Showing **solidarity**, in this context, means aligning our own personal social conduct to conform to a code of behaviour exhibited by other people, not only in connection with sport; viewing our own actions in concert with the behaviours of other people with whose social behavioural pattern we personally agree, and which we support by adopting it for ourselves.

3. Moral behaviour

A third subject area makes use of sporting ability and the associated social conduct to promote moral decision behaviour. There are rules for moral behaviour, in sport as in daily life, **rules** that sporting rulebooks define as particular dispositions for sporting behaviour and which, as such, must be **adhered to**. On the other hand, sport itself contains "unwritten" rules, that morally suggest certain behavioural dispositions in certain sporting situations. These "unwritten" rules of sport imply certain values as dispositions, as value orientations for our own actions in accordance with rules that build on our individual **acceptance of values**. Behaviours in sport and behaviours at school, at work and in everyday life are often fundamentally different. It is all the more important to accept values for our individual behaviour that do not incorporate any "double standards", whether in sport or in other areas of life: in this way we demonstrate our reliability to other people. These values constitute the basis of shared behavioural decisions which include "mutual respect" and respect for other cultures and different national heritages.

4. Olympic knowledge

A fourth, rather more cognitive subject area, imparts Olympic knowledge, partly as a complement and supplement to the other subject areas, partly as a critical reflection of sporting perfection and the resulting social and moral behaviours, and partly as an intellectual analysis of the particular tensional structure of standards and values between

idea (tradition) and reality (present day) in the world of sport and the Olympic Games. Here it is necessary to convey **knowledge** of the development of the **Olympic movement** and for this knowledge to be **acquired** by the schoolchildren, who should also use this necessary knowledge to justify and substantiate their social conduct and moral decision behaviour. It is also necessary for them to gain practical experience of the **Olympic ideals**, by means of intellectual re-enactment and **understanding** to comprehend the intentions behind those ideals. Finally, this calls for socio-critical and self-critical reflection, **comparing** the extent to which those existing and perceived **Olympic values** that ought to govern sporting and social actions and moral behaviour are genuinely fulfilled, and what actual **reality** in sport and in everyday life conflicts with and possibly diminishes them (cf. Naul, 2007).

My final comment is a reminder of Pierre de Coubertin's vision and concept of Olympism and education, which he briefly described in his Olympic letter No. III in October 1918. According to Pierre de Coubertin, Olympism is a state of mind, not a system. Nevertheless he also described four major tasks of education in the context of the harmonious development of body and mind. Coubertin wrote: "...to distinguish ... only the body and the mind, ... is too simplistic, but rather the muscles, the understanding, the character, and the conscience. This corresponds to the four-fold duty of the educator" (Coubertin, 2000, 547). Well, if the educator is to have a four-fold task as his duty to educate in the spirit of Olympism, then the pupils will have a four-fold subject area of Olympic learning, to learn about the physical, social, moral, and mental domains of modern Olympism in physical activities and sports competitions, at their school lessons and in the other settings of their daily life.

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