



INTERNATIONAL OLYMPIC ACADEMY



Olympism and Governance



12th

INTERNATIONAL SESSION

FOR EDUCATORS OF HIGHER INSTITUTES OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION

ANCIENT OLYMPIA

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ANCIENT OLYMPIA

GOVERNANCE AND OLYMPISM: THE SPANISH MODEL

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Olympic education is one of the so-called Fundamental Principles of Olympism and as such is recognized by the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which in its Olympic Charter mentions the word “*education*” eleven times in relation to its own activities and those of the International Federations (IFs) and National Olympic Committees (NOCs).

There is a great variety of organizational structures within the National Olympic Academies (NOAs) – indeed, almost as many structures as there are Academies! We have those that are integrated into their NOC, to which they belong; those that work through a commission or committee created for that purpose; those that function as a partnership with dozens and even hundreds of people interested in Olympic education; and even those which survive purely due to the personal commitment of their directors or presidents.

We find a similar heterogeneous situation in the Olympic Studies Centres (OSCs). Although an overwhelming majority depend on a higher educational institution, their structure, functioning and interrelation with their national NOCs and NOAs differ in each case.

Our analysis in this paper will be focused on the Spanish model, whose internal strengths and weaknesses will be identified along with threats and external opportunities.

Choosing the Spanish model of Olympic education to analyze led us to iden-

1. Prof. Dr María José Martínez Patiño participated in the Session and presented the paper.

tify some of the main strengths it presents:

1. The Spanish Olympic Academy is the oldest in the world and will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2018.

The Spanish Olympic Academy (SOA) was born under the protection of Spain's highest educational institution at the time: the National Institute of Physical Education (INEF) at the Polytechnic University of Madrid. Its foundation was promoted by three great figures in Spanish sport: the President of the Spanish Olympic Committee, Mr Juan Antonio Samaranch; the future Founding President of the SOA, Mr Conrado Duránte, and Mr José María Cagigal (the eminent sports philosopher and INEF Director).

2. The figure of Mr Conrado Duránte as a promoter of Olympic education in the Spanish-speaking world.

The Spanish Olympic movement (represented by Mr Conrado Duránte) was present at the institution of the International Olympic Academy (IOA) in 1961 in Olympia. Duránte returned from those first meetings bursting with the ideas of the IOA pioneers: professors Carl Diem, Ioannis Ketseas, Franz Lotz et al. Taking the Greek model as an example, Duránte had the vision to involve the Spanish Olympic and sports authorities in the creation of a NOA based in Madrid. Since 1968, Conrado Duránte has published dozens of research papers on pedagogical and Olympic subjects in Spanish.

3. A community of National Olympic Academies sharing a common language spoken by billions.

Because of the untiring pedagogical work of Conrado Duránte, the last fifty years have witnessed the creation of more than twenty NOAs in Spanish-speaking American countries. If we include, as we must, those countries that speak Portuguese, we reach almost thirty NOAs, all of which are now part of the Pan-American Association of National Olympic Academies or APAO. Officially recognized by the IOC, APAO is truly *sui generis*: there is nothing like it anywhere else in the world.

4. A wide network of OSCs spread across Spain.

The significance of Conrado Duránte as a reference point for Olympism in Spain inspired many professors, athletes and researchers to create OSCs in their respective institutions to reach as many people as possible and to

facilitate research into Olympism at Spanish universities. Thus, there are currently 36 OSCs spread across the country, making Spain's the world's largest network of centres dedicated to the Olympic movement.

5. The creation of other institutions which share the goals of Olympic education.

In addition to those already mentioned, other institutions have been created in Spain which also seek *inter alia* to contribute to the Olympic education of society. To name but two, both the *Spanish Pierre de Coubertin Committee* and the *Spanish Union of Olympic Philately* carry out important pedagogical work.

However, this model presents *weaknesses*, aspects that can be improved in organizations for more effective performance:

1. Blurring of the message

Although the creation of a range of bodies whose ultimate mission is Olympic education can be beneficial, this plurality can also cause the message to be diluted or concealed behind a sea of acronyms. In such cases, the recipient of the message may not be convinced of the reliability of the emissary.

2. Multiple organizations impede operability

We must add that many of the organizations that have been created, especially the Spanish OSCs, lack a formal structure, efficient organization and even a rudimentary programme of annual activities. The existence of multiple centres which are not engaged in any real activity reduces the credibility of those that work on a daily basis and in a structured way. It should be remembered that, while there are 36 OSCs registered with the SOA, only nine are included in the list published by the IOC Olympic Studies Centre.

The following weaknesses exacerbate the threats facing Olympic education:

1. Ignorance of the basic principles of Olympism.

As Conrado Durántez has said on many occasions, the Olympic principles are those that establish the difference between an Olympic Committee

and a high-performance sports centre. Without the work of the NOAs and their related organizations, we risk turning sports into a mere mechanistic instrument. This point is even more important when we talk about the OSCs, because they work directly with athletes or researchers in different areas of sport.

2. Social acceptance of myths or false realities propagated by ill-informed sources.

Without the work of the Olympic educational organizations, there is a real risk that myths, half-truths and even lies will take root in the public's understanding of the history of sport, Olympism and its protagonists – first and foremost, the French humanist Pierre de Coubertin. The pedagogical, informational and research work done by the OSCs is fundamental to providing scientific evidence that overturns these falsehoods.

3. Isolating the messenger.

It is very important that educational organizations do not conduct their debates, training and reporting on Olympism purely internally. It is imperative that NOAs and OSCs can be naturally incorporated into the full range of contemporary media. Societies are increasingly demanding higher quality content that is also useful and reliable, since every day sees more information available of decreasing reliability.

But all the above provides an opportunity for the implementation of new educational programmes or the improvement of existing ones:

1. Collaboration between organizations

Synergies between organizations in different fields, at different levels, from different countries and even with different objectives are fundamental to getting the message across to the greatest number of people possible. Sessions such as those organized by the IOA are thus essential, as they put the organizations in touch with each other and spread information about projects underway.

2. Applications to supranational projects

Because of the previous point and given the importance that society attributes today to the implementation of continuous improvements in educational projects, it is essential that collaborations between organizations

in different countries are able to apply for and win support, financial and otherwise, from supranational entities such as the IOC, UNESCO, and the European Union.

3. Improving the structure and operation of organizations

One of the main problems facing many Olympic educational organizations is their lack of recognition by the official education system. It is imperative that their mission, objectives, internal functioning and workers are officially acknowledged by an NOA or an OSC in order to enhance the professionalism of the work being done in Olympic education.

4. Links to other areas of knowledge

We are all familiar with the intimate relationship between Olympism and sport, but we must go further and propose educational projects that involve other areas of knowledge that are also closely linked to the Olympic Movement: classical studies, architecture, medicine (through the fight against doping), nutrition, sports law, media, voluntary programmes, sport and its relationship with the environment, new technologies applied to sports performance, athlete psychology, and many others.