

Reviewing Conceptualisations Of Olympic Education: A Meta-Narrative Analysis

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The aim of this research is to identify and evaluate the nature of the conceptualisation of Olympic education and the philosophies underpinning the design and implementation of Olympic education programmes in the literature. The analysis of literature on Olympic education and Olympic education initiatives is undertaken through a meta-narrative review employing techniques recently developed by Greenhalgh, Robert, Bate, Macfarlane, & Kyriakidou (2005). Research questions are firstly to define what bodies of knowledge and specific research traditions are relevant to the understanding of Olympic education and secondly, to identify what the key concepts, theories and methodological approaches are and to what extent the assumptions, approaches, findings and conclusions of the traditions are theoretically adequate, consistent and commensurable.

When Pierre de Coubertin introduced the modern Olympic Games, one of the ideals for the revival of the Games was the centrality of education (Müller, 2000). Despite Coubertin's educational philosophy and the IOC's recent commitment to Olympic education, there has been a lack of specificity in the definition of the concept of Olympic education as well as of the values being (or intending to be) delivered through Olympic education initiatives. Explanation of Olympic education as a concept and set of practices is relatively imprecise in the literature. Nevertheless, as a policy aim for the Olympic Movement, the development of Olympic education programmes remains a key goal for the IOC and thus for host cities and nations staging the Games. To address this gap or 'fuzzy' area in the definition of Olympic policy, there is a need to map out the field of clarifying the different interpretations and emphases of the philosophy and its operationalization in policy and curriculum terms. In relation to policy for implementing and evaluating Olympic education programmes, it is also significant to understand what Olympic education programmes consist of, what their pedagogical goals are intended to be, whom they are intended to target, how they should be evaluated and how successful they have been in meeting their goals.

There are perhaps two seminal texts in the English language literature addressing 'educational philosophy' as one of the ideals for the revival of the modern Olympics (Müller, 2000) and introducing the historical, pedagogical, didactical and empirical context of the development of Olympic education (Naul, 2008). However, there is little evidence of literature reviews that substantially address the issues in relation to Olympic education and Olympic values.

The analysis of literature on Olympic education is undertaken initially a systematic review and subsequently through a meta-narrative analysis of sources and themes identified in the systematic review which seeks to define and evaluate the various paradigms across disciplines and research traditions underlying the discussion of Olympic education and values. The meta-narrative method represents an extension of the systematic review methodology promoting a specific approach to the analysis of the findings of a systematic review. The development of the meta-narrative review seeks to illuminate different paradigmatic approaches to a complex topic area by considering how the 'same' topic has been differently conceptualised, theorised and empirically studied by different groups of researchers.

'Meta-narrative' is the shared set of concepts, theories and preferred methods taken by a group of researchers who form a research tradition and 'meta-narratives' are 'storylines' that unpack how research unfolds and changes over time within a research tradition (Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane, Bate, Kyriakidou, & Peacock, 2005). Informed by Kuhn's notion of scientific paradigms (1962), a paradigm is 'a world view' built into a particular research approach and a research tradition is a group of approaches coherent within systems of shared understanding of the ways of doing social science. Thus, different research traditions have different ways of looking at the world (paradigms) and different ways of looking at the world implying different stories (meta-narratives) of how the phenomenon we are looking at should be understood. Greenhalgh, Robert, Macfarlane et al. (2005) outline the process with six phases: a) planning; b) searching; c) mapping; d) appraisal e) synthesis; and f) recommendations. We have applied the steps to this research and identified 8 meta-narratives organised by (a) relevant academic discipline(s) the meta-narrative draws from, (b) scope, c) conceptualisation of Olympic education (related to Olympic values and Olympism); and d) key author(s).

This study will provide a critical understanding of the way that Olympic education is being conceptualised in particular relation to Olympic values and Olympic movement. It is also intended that the conceptual frame-

work developed from this element of the study will be used to directly inform empirical evaluation of Olympic education initiatives such that different types of goals and the means of evaluating them are specified.

References

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