

The Dream Day In The YOG 2016: Norwegian Pupils' Encounter With An Olympic Event

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Aim

The vision of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) is "to encourage young people around the world to practice sport; raise awareness of and encourage them to adopt the values of Olympism" (IOC, 2013, p. 14) and the local youth are among the main target groups for the YOG (IOC, 2013). However, research on former YOGs shows that the IOC to a limited extent has succeeded in conveying the Olympic values to local youth. According to Aplin and Lyon (2014), the YOG 2012 did not have an influence on participation in sport among youth, while Schnitzer (2015) found that participation in school programs had an effect on the local youth who participated on a voluntary basis and were previously interested in sport.

The Dream day was the most comprehensive program aimed at local youth during the Games and was mandatory for 21,000 students from 75 regional schools. The aim of the dream day was to make the students familiar with the Olympic values through being spectators at an Olympic sport competition, try an Olympic sport and take part in a cultural program. The research question is: How did the organizers succeed in transferring the Olympic values to the participants of the Dream Day and which factors influenced the participants' experiences?

Theoretical background

The cultural filter model (Dahl, Dybvig, & Keeping, 2013) is a communication model, which in this study is used to analyze how the Olympic values are transferred from the organizers of the Dream Day to the participants through communication agents (teachers, Dream Day hosts, activity leaders) and how the participants cultural filters (individual and socio-cultural background) influence their experiences.

Olympic education can be understood as using the Olympic ideals to develop and enhance positive values and actions among youth. Nauls (2008) four didactic approaches to Olympic education (knowledge-oriented, experience-oriented, physical effort oriented and life-world oriented) is used to understand how the Olympic values were transferred by the organizers and received by the participants.

Methods

This is a qualitative study, using document analysis of 43 personal essays from Dream Day participants from three different regional high schools as well as guideline documents and reports from the organizers. Observations were also done during the Dream Day.

The personal essays were coded and placed in five categories: 1) being spectator at the competitions, 2) trying sports activities, 3) attending the cultural program, 4) experience outside the program and 5) Olympic values. As part of the analysis, positive and negative statements were recorded and the essays were regarded as either mainly positive, negative or neutral. The participants experiences were also compared with their background (membership of a sports club and physical activity level) and expectations to the Dream Day.

Results and discussion

The majority of the participants in the Dream Day had a positive experience; however, the Dream Day program received mixed reviews. A majority of the participants enjoyed being spectator at the competitions; however, they regarded the physical activities and the cultural program not sufficiently adapted to the target group. Several participants felt that the main reason they were there was because the organizers needed an audience.

To examine Olympic education in the Dream Day, we use Nauls (2008) four didactic approaches. The Dream Day program itself is an example on an experience-oriented approach. The knowledge-oriented approach had limited success as the participants only to a limited degree learned something about the olympic history or understood the meaning of the olympic values. Because of low participation in the sport activities, the physical-effort-oriented approach were not very effective. However, many of the participants were inspired by watching some of the best young athletes compete. The life-world oriented approach did to a limited extent reach the participants, because the majority did not understand how the experiences from the Dream Day could be relevant to their daily life.

Several factors in the participants' background and the staging of the Dream Day influenced their experiences. A vast majority of the group with positive experiences from the Dream Day had high expectations and were already physically active. School preparations did not have any influence on the participants' experiences. The planning of the Dream Day started late and the organizers failed to facilitate a sufficient preparation program for the schools to implement. The organizers did not involve youth in the planning of the Dream Day, which influenced the organizers ability to adapt the program to the target group. Other factors were that the program was mandatory and the name "Dream Day" led to unnecessary high expectations.

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