

Title: Ideology or Reality? The Awareness of Educational Aims and Activities Amongst German and Norwegian Participants of the First Summer and Winter Youth Olympic Games.

Authors: Krieger, J., & Kristiansen, E.

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Keyword(s): N/A

Method: Interviews

Sports: Swimming, high jump, pole vault, sailing, fencing, 400m running, luge, alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, biathlon, curling, ski jumping, freestyle skiing, Nordic combined, speed skating, figure skating and ice hockey

Journal: Sport in Society

Main theme: Youth Olympic Games (YOG)

Secondary themes: International Olympic Committee (IOC), sport, education, Olympic movement

Aims: One of the motives of the IOC in establishing the YOG, was to raise the profile of athlete education within the Olympic movement. For example, a prevalent feature of the YOG was that it offered a Culture and Education Programme (CEP) through which young participants could learn about educational aspects of sport. This study focuses on athletes' perceptions of the educational emphasis of the YOG. By encouraging young athletes to share their experiences and involvement in the YOG, individuals will be in a better position to acknowledge and address how the new addition (i.e., CEP) to the Olympic movement can work most efficiently.

Method: From the first Youth Olympic Games held in Singapore (2010), eight German participants were selected. Participants included athletes from different educational backgrounds, different sports, and with different levels of success (medal winners and non-medal winners). Participants' ages ranged from 16 to 18 years. For the Winter Youth

Olympic Games (held in Austria, 2012), ten Norwegian and four German athletes were interviewed. All athletes were interviewed about their Olympic experiences after they had completed their final event. The results were analysed in such a way to highlight athletes' perceptions of the IOC's policy/intentions (i.e., through the CEP) which states that the athletes had the opportunity to: (1) Learn about global and sport topics; (2) Contribute to the environment and society; (3) Interact and build friendships with other young people from around the world; and (4) Celebrate the Olympic Movement and the diverse cultures of the world.

Results and Practical Implications: By using the athletes' perceptions of the CEP, the findings indicate that some aspects of the CEP were not perceived favourably by the athletes and coaches. The athletes embraced the interaction with international peers, however, their perceptions of learning, contribution to society, and celebration of the Olympic Movement were restricted to a focus on performing well. In relation to a dual career context, the athletes' mentioned that their preferred activities included 'Chat with Champions' and 'Meet the Role Models', with both activities making the biggest impression during the competition. The sessions were with current and former elite athletes who talked about their sporting career but also emphasised the importance of education during their high-performance sporting career. The athletes reported that further learning about doping, security etc. was useful and interesting knowledge portrayed through the YOG. The athletes' also had to prioritise other competitions or school assignments as reason for not attending the CEP. Some were able to take exams while others spent time doing their homework. The YOG adopted various elements from the Olympic Games such as the medal ceremony (playing the winners' national anthem) and the Olympic flame etc. which were all typical signs of the performance-orientated focus. Specifically, the older athletes expressed that 'success' was an important part of their YOG experience. The study concludes that the awareness of the IOC policy change amongst the interviewed athletes of the YOG is low.

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This is a result of the high performance setting of the YOG; the YOG's apparent focus on the elite aspects contradicts with the claims of the IOC that its movement is based on idealistic principles with educational intentions. Therefore, YOG have had limited success in achieving the educational ambitions of the Olympic Movement.

TASS have produced this lay summary. The full article is available (permissions may apply):
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/17430437.2015.1133604>