



Article

Olympic Education in France: A Legacy Issue or the Promotion of a Model in Crisis?

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Abstract: Both the promoters of Olympism and the organisers of the Olympic Games regularly employ the term legacy. In this context, the use of education as a tool constitutes an important stake. We have analysed the position of French actors in education with regard to Olympism and the measures implemented. In this respect, we have studied, on the one hand, the texts of the IOC and OCOGs from the 1960s to those concerning Paris 2024, in order to identify the concepts of education. On the other hand, we have focused on the professional texts of Physical Education and Sport (PES) teachers. Finally, in order to complete this analysis, we have examined the contents of projects labelled as part of the “Olympic Class” scheme, designed as one of the main channels for rolling out Olympic education in schools. This study has made it possible to identify the ways in which PES teachers engage in and take ownership of the concept of Olympic education, sometimes to the point of validating its ideological foundations or transforming them. Our study thus ponders the means used to make Olympism a universal subject and demonstrates that, far from offering real pedagogical treatment of Olympic facts, current practices aim rather to form generations of spectators attached to Olympism and guarantee the success of future Olympiads.

Keywords: values; Olympism; education; devices; legacy



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1. Introduction

Behind the reinstatement of the Olympic Games by Baron Pierre de Coubertin at the end of the 19th century lay the conviction that sport embodied values conducive to building a new social model around universalism, hierarchy and surpassment. In 1908, de Coubertin defined the Olympic idea as “[...] *the concept of a strong muscular culture based, on the one hand, on the chivalrous spirit, what you call here [in Great Britain] fair play and, on the other hand, on the aesthetic idea, the cult of beauty and grace*” (Coubertin 1908). The essential principles of Olympism, with a bedrock of regularly adjusted values (Schantz 2013), nonetheless require relays. Whether media-based, institutional or political, they must enable the diffusion of an ideal that should then be enacted. This is particularly the case for education, which constitutes one of the essential foundations of Olympism and which has become a fundamental component of the Olympic ideal (Naul et al. 2018).

Pierre de Coubertin considered that Olympism merged with education by assimilating it to “*universal sport education, accessible to all, lined with strong bravery and chivalrous spirit, blended with aesthetic and literary manifestation, serving as a driving force for national life and home for civic life*” (Coubertin 1908). In being sustained by a pedagogical ambition, Olympism is conceived as an education model that is both ambitious and emblematic. Going beyond the mere proceedings of sports events, it presumes effects over individuals and corresponds to a political project (Piggin 2019).

1.1. Olympic Education and Legacy

Looking at the transmission processes contributes to understanding the legacy of an event (Ramshaw 2015), which is often evoked to give meaning (Adams and Robinson 2019), but is unevenly documented when it relates to social or cultural fields. While almost continuous exposure to a flow of media during the time of the event participates in this transmission, its brevity and the population's low participation in Olympiads lead the effects to be debated. For this reason, promoters of Olympism seek to extend diffusion geographically, socially and temporally, in particular through the rollout of "Olympic education", which has become an unavoidable political and commercial stake (Kohe and Collison 2019). This explains why heritage refers to a variety of terminology and mobilises a multiplicity of fields (Viersac and Attali 2021). The existence of the concept in itself indicates that Olympism and the values associated with it are not diffused spontaneously (Kidd 2013). The Olympiads' influence is not sufficient, and it is important to organise this diffusion (Attali 2019). This corresponds to a large-scale political endeavour intended, more especially, to use educational and sporting institutions to spread the Olympic values and make them a pedagogical tool. In this respect, schools and universities are targeted, as are the institutions placed under the social responsibility of an organisation, such as the International Olympic Committee (IOC) (Bayle 2016). Moreover, the National Olympic Academies (NOA) were already given the mission by the IOC of ensuring this diffusion in 1968. The question of the possible redundancy of Olympic education alongside the teaching of Physical Education (PE) in schools can be raised, as their objectives may be convergent and also limited to mere promotion for the stakeholders (Kohe and Collison 2019). The school and the NOA mention the same notions of physical and cultural development of citizenship and emancipation, without, however, being based on the same ideologies. In this regard, the meaning that the actors concerned give to this Olympic education constitutes an important indicator for understanding their positions. While the IOC and successive Organising Committees for the Olympic Games (OCOG) have aimed to implement it in numerous countries, according to what concepts do they envisage it? Furthermore, what do schools and their teachers, as suggested, really do with it? The study of Olympic legacy (Gammon et al. 2013) through school sport education implies analysing the positions and projects of both the promoters of Olympism and the players likely to relay them. While some works have studied the role of sports events from the perspective of developing human capital (Lee et al. 2013), none of them have studied the educational enterprise generated by Olympism. Our study is thus unprecedented on this subject, although a key one in the promotion of Olympism, as well as on the legacy strategies developed since the 1990s (Kissoudi 2008).

The literature underlines the fact that Olympism is a system of thought resembling an ideology (Krieger and Kristiansen 2016), which consists of promoting the educational role of sport. In this respect, Olympism constitutes a tool to serve mass socialisation whose underpinnings should be analysed. Beyond the quadriennial event capturing all attention, Olympism is therefore, above all, a modern mythology (Schantz 2016) drawing on symbolic elements intended to convince people of the educational relevance of sport as a foundation of its expression and legitimacy. Having never been really defined, the mere use of the term leads to representations and draws on an imaginary imposing education through sport as a given.

1.2. Stakeholders in the Olympic Movement and Research Challenges

By combining history and sociology, this work aims to shed light on the use of Olympic education at school as an element of a policy strategy designed to establish, sustain, and then preserve the Olympic model and its associated representations. The political dimension of Olympic education is obvious; the State is particularly invested with several advisors to the President of the Republic dedicated to the subject, the appointment of an inter-ministerial delegate for the Olympic and Paralympic Games reporting to the Prime Minister's office, and that of a ministerial delegate for the ministers of the Education

nationale and higher education, more particularly responsible for developing a *dispositif* likely to interest the young. Olympic education is considered a *dispositif*, as defined by Foucault, in other words, “a resolutely heterogeneous ensemble of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions, in short: the said as much as the unsaid” (Foucault 2001, p. 299). The interplay of multiple discursive elements should enable us to reconstruct this heterogeneous ensemble on which the *dispositif* of Olympic education is based. Yet, the aim is also to see “the link that may exist between these elements” (Foucault *ibid.*). We hypothesise that it lies in the strategic role of Olympic education. While the historical approach tends to show that use of the Olympic model in the education system has had a promotional as well as socialisation purpose regarding the lack of direction of the young, we put forward the hypothesis that Olympic education aims also to combat the crisis of the Olympic model itself. With its supposed values no longer resonating with individuals’ environmental, social and health concerns (Chappelet 2012), Olympic education is observed as the way to create a new legitimacy for the Olympic model among the young generations.

To understand what has become of this political intention, it is necessary to look at what teachers as relays in schools do with it. Beyond the aims and strategies of the Olympic establishment, Olympic education inevitably passes through the decisive filter of teachers and their pedagogical practices. It is therefore a question of not only understanding for what reasons the actors of Olympism have chosen school to relay this Olympic education, but also analysing how it is used by the teachers. Do they take the language and rhetoric conveying the Olympic imaginary on board? Are they themselves socialised in sporting terms by this model before relaying it to their pupils? Or, on the contrary, do they make a distinction between Olympic education and Physical Education (PE)? What educational impact do they give to Olympism in PE? Finally, do they operate as conveyors of the Olympic model or do they subject it to pedagogical analysis, to the point of introducing pupils to a critical distancing approach.

These questions merit being tested through a case study at national level. In this respect, France constitutes an opportune field of study, as its Organising Committee intends to involve the whole of the country in the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. We have already underlined the role of political actors in the Olympic Movement. Although the Movement was initially organised by the private sector, it was taken over by the public sphere because of the stakes involved. It was then that the National Olympic Committee, representing federations, faced competition from the newly created Ministry of Sport, and that schools were involved in promoting the Movement. The implementation of several educational projects attests to the particular situation of the country and its long-standing and complex relationship with Olympism. The latter explains why school sport moved away from the sports movement to build an education-based more on educational objectives than sporting stakes (Gomet and Attali 2018). The fact is that PE teachers have been influenced by the Olympic practice model and are regularly called upon to transmit its values. This situation has led us to propose several scales of analysis to understand the diversity of Olympic-related educational projects from a synchronic and diachronic perspective, as well as an institutional and professional point of view.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Materials

We collected a series of documents demonstrating the evolution of the concepts of school Olympic education according to Olympic institutions on the one hand and of the concepts expressed by French PE teachers on the other (Table 1). For the first part, we put together IOC and OCOG texts since the 1960s to identify the variable concepts of education. For the second, we targeted the professional contributions of French PE teachers and, more particularly, the physical education and sport journal *EPS* and its 384 issues published between 1950 and June 2019. The journal is directed by a group of teachers but financed by the French Ministry of Education, *ministère de l'Éducation nationale*. It aims to promote

certain institutional guidelines while providing a space for pedagogical debate intended to draw out the most appropriate teaching methods.

Table 1. Data Sources.

Sources and Data	Year or Period of Publications
Journal EPS (3840 articles)	July 1950–June 2019
<i>Enseigner les valeurs. Un manuel d'éducation olympique</i> (IOC)	2007
<i>Livre Blanc sur le sport</i> (Commission of the European Communities)	2007
<i>Sport, Écoles et Valeurs Olympiques en Europe</i> (Council of Europe)	2002
<i>Essai de doctrine du Sport</i> (France's High Committee for Sport)	1965
130 fact sheets for school projects labelled as "Olympic Class" (website of French National Olympic and Sports Committee/CNOSF)	2019

In order to complete this discourse analysis, we examined the content of the 130 school projects labelled as part of the "Olympic Class" scheme, designed to be one of the main rollout channels for Olympic education at school. Such labelling corresponds to an initiative of the French National Olympic and Sports Committee (CNOSF), which aims to recognise school sports projects implemented by PE teachers and explicitly refers to Olympism. These project documents, produced by the IOC representative in France, aim to promote the Olympic ideal and are indicative of the ideals to be defended.

The publications used in this study are above all destined for teachers and educators, for them to build a database to be used when teaching young people.

2.2. Data Analysis

The journal EPS constitutes an essential reference featuring all debates, controversies and stakes underpinning the teaching of sport at school in France. We selected all the articles addressing Olympism in order to understand the positions adopted by teachers. Our analysis grid focused on identifying the type of relationship that writers established between schools and Olympism. The values, stakes and favoured practices were given particular attention. In a complementary way, we also studied the effects expected by the authors. When information was available, we analysed the type of actual benefits. It is significant to note that this journal represents an important aid for the teaching profession by inspiring teachers in planning, learning and organising knowledge. Its transversal study aimed to measure how far French schoolteachers adhere to the Olympic ideals promoted by the IOC. Examining the journal's content over almost 70 years made it possible to highlight the process contributing to the establishment of varying links between school and Olympism in the period from 1950 to June 2019.

Within the framework of this study, we selected all the published articles including the terms Olympism, Olympic Games and de Coubertin. On account of the journal's editorial line, they are all linked to an approach related to education and may include an opinion, present projects or the results of Olympic competitions in relation to the supposed effects. By identifying the reference modes concerning Olympism, we have therefore presumed the type of relationships established with the teaching of PE and Sport.

We analysed the 130 labelled projects listed on the CNOSF website for the 2018–2019 school year using the thematic grid below (Table 2).

Table 2. Thematic analysis grid.

Initial Project Proposer	CDOS ¹	School	Team of PE Teachers	One Single PE Teacher
Aims				
Sports used				
Duration	One-off	PE teaching cycle	School year	Several school years
References to high-level sport	None	Patronage	Records/performances	Other
Participation of high-level sportspeople				
Link with other school subjects	None	One	Occasional	Multidisciplinary projects
Reference to the “values of Olympism”				
Possibility of debating the foundations/legitimacy of Olympism				
Reference to ancient Olympism				
Reference to deviations in sport	Health	Cheating/doping	Inequality/discrimination	Performance Other
What is assessed	No assessment	Knowledge of the values of Olympism	Knowledge of the history of Olympism	Subject knowledge with no direct link to Olympism

This thematic grid allowed us to analyse the pedagogical rationales behind the use of the Olympic model as an educational aid and to reveal three ideal types.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. The Concepts of Education in IOC and OCOG Texts

Olympism represents attachment to a tradition whose history is its guarantor (Violette 2020), while embodying virtues on which political players seek to capitalise. Institutional stance has made it a rhetorical argument presenting Olympism as a collective norm based on common sense, which is undebatable and allows justification of the programmes implemented.

During the 1960s, undertakings in the field of sport development made it possible to justify several directions taken. The creation of the Provisional International Committee for the Organisation of Pierre de Coubertin’s Fair Play Trophy on 7 September 1963² (Grosset and Attali 2011) indicated a reactivation of the Olympic ideal with a view to giving meaning to the practice of sport as a lever for new forms of socialisation, aimed more particularly at the young.

Almost forty years later, this belief was reactivated to impose an Olympic model for education intended to become the rule. Faced with young people considered to be lacking direction, institutional leaders revived the Olympic ideal that was supposed to enable the resolution of difficulties and the sustainability of projects of international scope. The European project for Sport, Schools and Olympic Values in Europe was explicit on the subject: “Olympic education strengthens the cultural identity of individuals in a globalised world and promotes the well-being of each one. It gives school children an experience that enables them to live the Olympic spirit wherever they are and reaffirms their own sporting traditions. The mysticism surrounding the Olympic Games fills the young with enthusiasm, motivates teachers and stimulates their imagination” (Council of Europe 2002, p. 2). The persistence of the belief

in pure sport (Simon 2000), more particularly present throughout institutional milieus, should be noted. The European Year of Education through Sport in 2004 was intended to contribute to valorising these principles by initiating action presenting Olympism as their bearer. It did not however envisage any education concerning other forms of social practices also associated with Olympism, such as cheating or violence. If education should enable the young to face complex social situations, it seemed unthinkable to expose them to what were considered deviations in the sporting space supposedly free from any deviant behaviour. Although school had been hitherto criticised concerning the use of sport (Gomet and Attali 2018), it may nonetheless be used to teach everything except what appears to lack legitimacy. Olympism disseminates the vision of an idealised society free from conflict and controversy.

Several initiatives would therefore encompass these principles. The charter of the young European athlete, the *Charte du Jeune Sportif Européen*, one of the schemes backed by Europe, was therefore aimed at an “awareness of the values of sport and the Olympic ideal. The “*Charte du Jeune Sportif Européen*” should constitute the commitment each child or adolescent will make when he/she first becomes a member of a sports association (. . .) This project aims to contribute to building a common culture for young athletes of the European Union. By drawing up a common point of reference -the Charter- European schoolchildren will discover the universality of the values of sport and education and will develop relationships based on the wish to know and understand the other, to identify our common traits and to enrich ourselves through our diversity”. The idea was therefore not to develop critical thinking in schoolchildren, but rather to diffuse collective norms inherited from the 19th century, at a time when the political, economic and sociocultural contexts were evolving considerably.

3.1.1. Educating in Olympic Thought or Educating to Think Olympism?

The booklet on *Teaching values. An Olympic education toolkit* (CIO 2007) both constituted an original initiative and symbolised the ambivalence of the Olympic Movement. A real methodology is proposed to ensure that teachers follow the framework defined by the IOC and become conveyors of the Olympic ideology. This was a true political project aimed at making a certain type of social organisation acceptable, based on social relationships and giving value to the moral principles inherent in Olympism. The discourse left no doubt as to the plan and included elements used since the beginning of the 20th century (Wong 2011) to understand sport in an essentialist manner: “(. . .) the educational values of the Olympic Movement—joy of effort in sport and physical activities, fair play, respect for others, striving for excellence, and balance between body, will and mind—have relevance and application far beyond the context of sport. (. . .) Inspire the dreams of learners with Olympic stories of triumph and tragedy. Inspire international understanding and peace with the messages, magic and mystery of the Olympic symbols and ceremonies. **Inspire the humanity of learners by teaching the Olympic values.**” (p. 24, in bold in the original text). The school’s mission should therefore be to deploy projects that valorise athletes, glorify behaviours and demonstrate excellence serving the recognition of an event turned myth. School should thus structure itself on the principles of an external institution to contribute to its valorisation. Teachers should rely on demonstrations of Olympism to educate in embodied values intended to become a collective norm without paying attention to their production. They should spread a message that consists in transmitting this myth to ensure its future. This situation tends to question even the principle of Olympic education and the effects of its expression. If there is to be legacy, it can only be envisaged from a beneficial angle and is most often considered as being spontaneous.

3.1.2. “Génération 2024”: Integrating Olympism into School Policies

Looking ahead to the 2024 Paris Olympic Games (POG), the *Génération 2024* scheme started in 2019 is one of the main measures aimed at implementing the educational intent. This state-developed scheme, with a manager appointed by the state to ensure its diffusion, was intended to create a lever effect, allowing wide adherence. This highlights

the enlargement of the circle of participants in the movement for promoting Olympism through educational programmes (Kristiansen et al. 2016). The Ministerial Delegate for the Paris Games has clearly announced its objectives: *“Valorising and strengthening the links between schools and the sport movement, and building the conditions necessary for the young to project themselves with confidence and ambition towards what will be the greatest sporting event in the world”* (Terret 2019a). Such an intention contains a fundamentally new approach. It is no longer a question of focusing on the universality and legitimacy of Olympism to orient and/or lend credibility to guidelines or projects in the field of sport, such as the organisation of major events, but rather, on the contrary, of using schools to encourage adhesion to Olympism and prepare the young generations to participate *“with confidence”*. The usefulness relationship is thus reversed, as adhesion to the 2024 Paris Games is evidently foreseen as being difficult. Olympism is no longer the institution conducive to vertically socialising the young but is rather a debatable social reference that should be kept afloat so that future citizens continue to adhere to it and believe in it. In this respect, use of the term *“confidence”* is significant in that the aim is to preserve it while doubts, if not explicit contestation (Horne 2017), multiply throughout the population. In this context, Olympic education becomes an institutional strategy for the preservation of past legitimacy. The Ministerial Delegate for the Paris Games specified the advantage of rebuilding bridges between school and Olympism:

“Initially at the heart of the Coubertinian project for the restoration of the modern Olympic Games, the strong relations between education and Olympism should henceforth leave a lasting imprint, a legacy to nourish the new generations, whether as a long-term commitment to practising sport or the integration of the values of Olympism” (Terret 2019a). The effects of such a scheme are at the heart of the approach and are intended to strengthen the meaning of Olympism through its link with schools as its relay. Far from putting itself forward as a useful aid for school education, Olympism aims to use its relationship with school to strengthen its presence in the minds of the younger generations.

The legacy therefore serves the legitimacy of Olympism more than a real project of social transformation. However, both win, as the values of Olympism merge with those the school intends to convey: *“Mentioned in the Olympic Charter, they constitute a trilogy—excellence, friendship, respect—which represent as many challenges to be met by our Schools”* (Idem).

Ethics are therefore at the heart of the links established between school and Olympism and are applied in the conditions defining school labelling. The *“Génération 2024”* label is essentially obtained through practices facilitating the promotion of Olympism within schools: *“The development of structuring projects with local sports clubs, participation in Olympic and Paralympic promotion events, assisting or welcoming top-level sportspeople and making existing sports facilities within schools available to sports associations and local companies thus represent the four constitutive sections of labelling applications”*. These four criteria correspond to Olympism’s use of school resources to establish and develop its mythical representations. Finally, the scheme demonstrates how the state has taken on the role of promoting Olympism, which appears obvious when a country is chosen as host for the Olympic Games.

3.1.3. Diffusing Olympism to Ensure a Legacy

The will to strengthen the diffusion of the Olympic model, its values and practices, goes beyond the framework of Paris 2024. In 2014, the publication of the 2020 agenda with its forty recommendations overall established the IOC’s future roadmap, based on which numerous countries would take position (Naul et al. 2018). Recommendation 22 thus states: *“Spread Olympic values-based education: 1. The IOC to strengthen its partnership with UNESCO to include sport and its values in school curricula worldwide. 2. The IOC to devise an electronic platform to share Olympic values-based education programmes of different NOCs and other organisations. 3. The IOC to identify and support initiatives that can help spread the Olympic values.”* The *Génération 2024* scheme is one aspect of this roadmap.

Beyond that, many of the recommendations are formulated in such a way as to counter the criticism faced by the Paris Games. Literature on the subject for London 2012 makes it possible to identify the wide variety of social and political protest (Giulianotti et al. 2015): absence of forecast economic spin-offs, rehousing and expropriation, infrastructure privatisation, pollution, contradictions between communication on environmental sustainability and large industrial sponsors, and loss of individual freedom in the Olympic neighbourhoods. Yet, the 2020 agenda orients Olympism towards greater sustainability (economic, environment and social), increased integrity (physical and moral) and more gender equality. A good half of the recommendations are in fact built on the criticism addressed to Olympism, focusing on its widening gulf with present concerns linked to the environment, cost control and construction convertibility (and therefore sports facilities). A further section is dedicated to the need for greater diffusion of Olympism by strengthening ties with other institutions (school, culture and sports federations, etc.) or by developing diffusion tools (Olympic channel). Finally, the recommendations as a whole aim to deal with the imperative for legitimisation in reaction to Olympism's legitimacy crisis and, more widely, that of major sports events, which appear to be increasingly anachronistic (Dyreson and Llewellyn 2008). In a certain manner, they embody a bygone modernity that combined technical, economic, social and environmental progress into one, whereas today they are most often perceived as being antinomic. As a result, education at the service of Olympic legacy appears more as a means to fight this decline in legitimacy (Le Yondre 2021).

The document detailing the objectives of the *Génération 2024* scheme exposes the educational ambition and mentions the partnership contracted with the NGO Play International and its "Playdagogy" method. The latter consists in using sport games to increase awareness of values or, more precisely, practices, such as handisport. Rolled out "*from school to university*", the partnership may draw attention on two counts.

The first concerns the sporting model aims to diffuse refer to schoolchildren. Indeed, Olympic sport is mainly that of competition. Paris 2024 and the public authorities supporting it have shown they have no intention of moving away from this by announcing the objective of 80 medals. On the other hand, the NGO Play International embodies actors who give priority to games rather than sport as institutionalised in its competitive form. The stance it takes, moreover, consists well and truly in turning away from the most widely diffused sport practices in favour of games-based ones, which engage children in collaborative relationships rather than in agonistic ones. Yet, while Olympism shares the term "game" with this NGO, the concept at work in the Paris Games is quite the opposite. There is clearly a gap between the spectacle offered during the Olympic Games and the educational content announced. Yet this gap goes beyond this partnership alone and more widely expresses continuous ambivalence of the educational intent. Two types of objectives implying different approaches and underlying concepts of education are systematically combined: the first intends to educate the young in values ("excellence, friendship and sharing") while the other aims more basically for a wider influence of Olympism, quantified by an increase of over 20% in the number of young members in Olympic and affiliated federations. While the two are not necessarily contradictory, the practice modalities they involve are more so: the sports practised in Olympic federations and more precisely in the clubs affiliated to them show different practical concepts of education through sport to the ones favoured by the partner NGO Play International.

The second aspect of this partnership focuses on the place of school sport. The introduction of Olympic values into the field of Physical Education and Sport is not new. In 2013, a framework convention signed between the French National Olympic and Sports Committee and *Education Nationale* included the publication of information sheets for teachers entitled "PE, Sport and Olympism". Even earlier, the organisation of the 1992 Winter Olympic Games in Albertville resulted in the creation of a kit named *Ecolympique* (Ecolympic), aimed at engaging French primary schoolchildren in the event and promoting the culture of Olympism. Further examples exist and attest to the regularity of the concern to sustain Olympism culture at school (Chatziefstathiou 2012). On the other hand, the

integration of non-school actors in school sports practices marked more significant openness. Beyond the spectrum of the privatisation of school sport, it is the introduction of new content and new educational methods using sport, which raises questions. The *playdagogy* developed by Play International in the form of kits includes the use of game-based sport for the transmission of values and consequently expresses a different concept of education through sport to the one developed by PE throughout several decades. In perceiving the legacy of Olympism through the lever of school, *Génération 2024* thus contributes to redefining the contours of school sport.

More generally, adding Olympic education to the agenda was intended to test the implementation of new public policies in the field of sport. These policies are based on increasing partnership with the private sector, as in the case of Play International, and aimed to valorise schools capable of responding to calls for project proposals by distinguishing them from those on the fringes of the *Génération 2024* scheme.

3.2. Olympic Education by Teachers: From Relay to Transformation

3.2.1. Teachers' Reticence towards the Olympic Policy

In the face of policy proselytism, it is necessary to look at both teachers' ability to take Olympism on board and their perception of the resulting changes. Studying the positions expressed by teachers (Chatziefstathiou 2012) allows several trends to emerge. First of all, it can be noted that the values attached to the Olympic ideal and used by institutional leaders have not really been embraced by teachers who see them only as an area distant from their professional concerns. Olympism is considered in its generic form without concrete and explicit links to the teaching of PE being envisaged. This observation thus questions the reality of a legacy that the thurifers of Olympism evoke but that the teachers supposed to implement it keep at a distance.

For French teachers, Olympism seems to be limited to a quadrennial event. The Rome Olympic Games in 1960 inaugurated an arrangement that led the editors of the journal *EP.S* to propose an insert dedicated to the event every four years. Their militancy was clear through the title of the first article, referring to the Games as the triumph of the human condition: "*Les Jeux de la XVII^e Olympiade. Triomphe de l'humaine condition*" (Boisset 1960, p. 26). The laudatory tone clearly characterises the relationship established by most PE teachers with Olympism. The latter is seen as a virtuous model with no real presence in schools. The technical excellence of athletes, the records and the *a priori* unlimited progress seem to be the only aspects retaining attention. Throughout the articles, the journal includes physical preparation for the events, results and performances without any established link to the teaching of PE and Sport. While this journal is an exegesis of the teaching of PE, it mentions no relation between Olympism and education and seems to be more particularly directed towards spectators and trainers than educators. Apart from a series of articles by Jean Amsler (1967a, 1967b, 1967c) on the Ancient Games and their mythology and those by Y-P. Bouloungne (1968, 1988), which endeavoured to position Olympism at a cultural level, it seems to be limited to expressing a form of practice within the confines of a sports facility. There has been no questioning of the supposed or real relevance of these practices by professionals, although the latter are well aware of educational issues.

In this respect, the Grenoble Games were the illustration of a significant stance being taken. For the first time since 1924, France was host to an Olympic event. In this context, the journal *EP.S* simply proposed a spectator's guide, provided technical analyses of the events before the Games and published a cumulative review of the results afterwards. This situation was repeated for the Mexico Games, for which no educational reflection was provided.

In the same way, the very extensive special Olympic Games feature concerning the Los Angeles events in 1984 illustrated the difficulty encountered in understanding Olympism as an educational object. The articles highlighted "*the unquestionable progress*" (Calmat 1984, p. 38) of French results without the latter being attributed to any particular policy concerning large-scale training. The rhetoric relayed by the journal *EP.S* limited itself to

agreed stances, similar to the one developed since the beginning of the 20th century. In a tense geopolitical context, the aim was to underline the splendour and above all the sustainability of the Olympic endeavour, without showing any real concern for its social scope: “On several occasions, the Olympic Games have ignored any boycotting (. . .) The Olympic Games of Los Angeles showed how Olympism has remained victorious” (Bobin 1984, p. 54). It was therefore well and truly the acclaimed virtues of sport that constituted the only reading grid. It was as if it seemed obvious that Olympism was synonymous with universal progress based on a humanist project, which justified the teaching of PE at school without any articulation with content that remained particularly vague.

Only a selection of elite sports was referred to by the authors of the feature, while the practice of sport as presented during the 1984 Games was not really considered to be a place for education. Although evoking fulfilment may imply a need to explore the foundations of Olympism and exploit its educational possibilities, the absence of initiative in this area during the months preceding the organisation of the Games was more characteristic of merely announcing it than a real will to engage in reflection in this field. While greater attention could once again have been expected on the occasion of their organisation in France, the Albertville Games in 1992 were no exception and characterised almost half a century of distance between two objects that promoters of Olympism joined together while teachers detached themselves from them.

The attribution of the organisation of the 2024 Olympic Games to Paris seems to have opened a new cycle. The journal *EPS* has moreover made itself its relay by creating a dedicated section entitled “Ambition 2024” in issue n° 381 dated September 2018. Written by the Ministerial Delegate for the Olympic and Paralympic Games, it aims to highlight the importance of legacy by presenting the main initiatives (Terret 2019b). While representing a turning point, the fact nonetheless remains that this section shows continuity of the operations initiated for almost 70 years.

These repeated special features on the occasion of each Olympiad contrast with the absence of Olympic education programmes able to focus more particularly on young people’s ability to grasp the determinants of events. Likewise, nothing is said, and even less analysed, concerning a necessary positioning with regard to emerging practices (doping and discrimination, etc.) throughout the years. Ultimately, Olympism is limited to its only event, and it is difficult to know what its real contribution was to the mission of educating and instructing the young in the second half of the 20th century.

While education views itself as being both a place of learning for fundamental knowledge and a means to awaken the young to their environment and make them informed citizens, it appears that in the case of Olympism, these objectives remain in the background. By raising hardly any questions on the principle of equality or the purpose of regulation, on addictive behaviours through doping or how to live together in relation to the issue of fair play, not only does school not enable schoolchildren to assess them through PE, but more especially leads to the repetition of a rhetoric whose social impact seems to be reduced. While the discourse of PE actors refers regularly to social reference practices and, more generally, the need to insert PE into its social environment, analysis of the relationships between Olympism and education shows a certain disinterest in a field that attracts numerous young who are fascinated by Olympic pomp and splendour. Finally, failing to deal with the educational aspect contributes to transforming Olympic education into the diffusion of the idealised vision of Olympism.

PE and Sport seem thus to be organised around two poles. When it is a case of legitimising its existence or justifying its content, its teachers call upon the values attached to sport, as well as the consubstantial virtues characterising it and embodied by Olympism. On the contrary, when reflection focuses on the modalities of teaching, the aims to be pursued or the mechanisms to be implemented, only sporting technicity is given priority. This situation makes it possible to measure the large gap between the political project and its implementation.

3.2.2. Extracurricular Olympic Classes: Olympic Education in Action

While analysis of the publications in the journal EPS highlights the difficulty in making Olympism an educational tool, the CNOSF has encouraged schools to do more in their educational use of it. It proposes a real programme of policies to allow management of the young at different levels, without the school representing the only favoured institution for this. Its programme for education in sporting and Olympic culture, *Programme d'Education à la Culture Sportive et Olympique* (PECSO), is built around three different projects, including Olympic Youth Camps, Olympic Days and Olympic Classes. The latter project is designed as “*an educational action intended for schools using Olympic and sporting themes as a learning aid*” and is an incentive for schools, in particular PE teachers, to organise projects related to Olympism. The content of the actions implemented thus makes it possible to analyse how teachers take ownership of Olympism to produce educational content and to identify the existence of initiatives going beyond the mere glorification of “values” and the champions embodying them.

The exhaustive study of the 130 Olympic classes labelled during the 2018–2019 school year leads to a first observation. Geographical distribution in France is very uneven, as projects are developed in clusters. When reading the projects, it can be observed that departmental Olympic and sport committees are not involved in the creation of projects in the same way. The department of the North, for example, has taken the initiative of contracting a partnership agreement with the sports union for primary school education, the *Union Sportive de l'Enseignement du Premier degré* (USEP), to select thirteen classes for participation in a project on “*the universal values of sport and Olympism*”. Following the same approach, the CDOS of Loire-Atlantique has selected six classes from around Nantes to be involved in an annual project aimed at developing knowledge related to Olympism (study of values, its history and modern Olympic Games); the regional Olympic and sport committee, the *Comité Régional Olympique et Sportif* (CROS), of Nouvelle-Aquitaine has organised Olympic meets for eight schools preceded by “*preparation quizzes*” and the CDOS of Seine Maritime has involved eight classes in a seven-year project “based on the values of Olympism” leading up to the Paris Games in 2024. The list is long and gives a first indication of the reality of this scheme, designed as a bottom-up device for teachers wishing to set up projects. Most of the projects are in fact driven by the local Olympic committees evidently seeking to relay the promotion of Olympism to schools. The possibility of legacy through Olympic education appears to be more the fruit of a top-down diffusion process in which the margin of teacher appropriation remains uncertain.

Examining the projects makes it possible to identify three types that are distinguishable from each other by the way Olympism is used in schoolchildren's education. The first type concerns projects in which the action of celebrating and promoting Olympism is an educational goal in itself. The aim is to make known its values, history and organisation. The second type of projects focuses on the convergence of Olympic values (excellence, friendship and respect) with those of school to transmit them to schoolchildren through practising sport. Finally, the third makes Olympism an aid for various types of learning (technical, scientific, social and moral) and often goes beyond sports activities. These three types of projects thus adopt different approaches and are based on three distinct concepts of legacy through education.

The first type regroups promotional projects. Such is the case, for example, for a project being rolled out in the Oise department concerning 51 classes and roughly 1200 schoolchildren. Its scope indicates, without any doubt, that the Oise CDOS has taken the initiative of calling upon the schools themselves, although the scheme was designed as a call for applications from teachers. The name of the project (“*Classes olympiques de l'Oise 2018–2019*”) and the descriptions are moreover systematically identical. Two objectives are indicated: “*discover the symbols, values and history of Olympism*” and “*prepare pupils for Paris 2024 by making them informed actors or spectators*”. The benefit of making Olympism known (symbols, values and history) may vary, but the second objective is explicit. Developing the culture of Olympism aims to prepare “*informed spectators*”. Once again, such an option

is open to debate, as being informed can refer as much to keen knowledge of the events as to the ability to step back from the Games, their economic and social stakes. Yet at no moment is the language of critical thinking, analysis or distancing used to indicate the intention of forming future spectators—rather than citizens—capable of identifying the pitfalls and limits of the Olympiad and its political stakes in the fundamental sense of the term. On the contrary, Olympic education seems to be designed as a means to ensure the future participation, even enthusiasm, of the young and to guarantee a form of popular success throughout the country. As a last example, numerous projects are structured around quizzes or point games evaluating formal knowledge of Olympism and Paris 2024 (its events and ecological virtues, etc.) and rewarding those with the most points. The intention of this teaching method is Olympic education, rather than educating in Olympism as a social phenomenon. The aim is to encourage students to adhere, even convert, rather than giving them objective and contrasted knowledge with an analytical, even critical, dimension linked to the imbrication of the Olympic Games with political and social issues. Recurrent encounters with champions or top-level sportspeople contribute to this intention to establish the Olympic model as an obvious cultural reference in the minds of the young generations, through their emotional and cognitive adhesion.

Projects of the second type are also built on Olympic values but go beyond merely aiming to make them known. The aim is to transmit them, to encourage schoolchildren to integrate them, even to question the way in which they may be implemented in sport and beyond. In most cases, the myth mechanically associating Olympism with universal values is relayed yet combined with an approach aiming to transmit the values and put them into practice in concrete situations (often sports ones). In other words, the myth gives rise to transposition at the service of ethical education. Numerous projects, for example, are based on Paralympic activities to increase awareness of disability and at times, more widely, acceptance of difference. In Carcassonne, the Handisport Committee sought acknowledgement by applying for the “Olympic Class” label and developing the project entitled CANOPE “*aiming to make tomorrow’s citizens aware of disability (. . .) and open up the young to the persistent question of how to integrate disability into society*”. While the educational intention rests on belief in morally virtuous sport, it is not restricted to the celebration of the Olympic model, but rather includes sporting practice. On that note, it is necessary to distinguish between projects according to the level of didactical transposition envisaged by the designers. It is minimal, for example, when the aim is to organise Olympiads in teams to transmit solidarity and team spirit, as if the values were activated as soon as teams were formed and skills transfer took place automatically. It is, on the contrary, more advanced when an Olympic marathon project takes the form of a series of ten long-distance running sessions aiming to develop in schoolchildren “*the ability to fulfil the contract at a steady pace, with respiratory ease and without any competitive spirit*”. When the activity is designed so as to place the pupil in a situation linked to sport and social interaction conducive to the development of a skill, the automatic connection between sport, Olympism and value is reduced.

Finally, the third type of project distances itself from the myth by making Olympism an aid for learning. Certain projects, for example, use Olympic activities to undertake work based on the physiology of the body and nutrition. Others leave the sports field by using Olympic history as their starting point to extend learning to the theme of “*the body in movement in art, from prehistory to today*”. On this note, projects described as being interdisciplinary are many in number. The Olympic Class has thus become the theme around which links are forged between the different subjects at school. These projects are sometimes completely disconnected from any reference to the values of Olympism. The 2024 Paris Games are then only considered by teachers as an event on the horizon which, through its strong media visibility and relative social legitimacy, may constitute an area for the transdisciplinary application of the content they dispense. Such is the case, for example, of the project conducted in Châteaubriant, which combines the teaching of PE, mathematics, life sciences and technology in the practice of athletics. The project is labelled

Olympic Class but makes no reference to the values of Olympism nor even to the Olympic Games. Others, on the contrary, include reference to values, as in Isigny-sur-Mer where teachers have designed “a transdisciplinary project between Latin, French, History, Plastic Arts and PE, based on Olympism and its values.” In the same, more frequent, vein, works uniting PE and History on the subject of the Ancient Games are recurrent in the panel.

These three ideal-type Olympic Classes should be considered as analytical tools (Weber [1965] 1992). They do not reduce the complexity of individual cases but rather call upon rationales that combine. It should however also be pointed out that the first type is quantitatively much more frequent. This may be explained by the cluster distribution mentioned earlier. The map of Olympic Classes shows how certain towns or departments have a high concentration of projects, which are very often identical. These projects are, in reality, initiated by the CDOS or CROS and are used for promotional purposes. The projects that appear to be geographically isolated are more often of the second and—especially—third type. In other words, the level of appropriation concerning the “Olympic Class” scheme rises when it is more localised and teachers’ initiative is bottom-up. This observation implies two forms of legacy through education at school. One is marked by the strong imprint of actors in Olympism on transmission; in such a way that Olympic legacy paradoxically strengthens Olympism itself as a legitimate cultural model among future generations of practitioners and spectators. Contrasting with this form of legacy, which we will call autotelic, is one that, on the contrary, is based on usage of the Olympic Games’ social legitimacy—and more generally sport—to favour learning at school. Here, the effects of Olympism go beyond Olympism itself. This is precisely the case when it is considered as a concrete and transdisciplinary field of application for school knowledge. It thus becomes a tool to be used in policies for education through sport, intended to rebuild both the programmes and principles to be transmitted to the young generations.

4. Conclusions

This study aimed to grasp the policies implemented around Olympism in France over a long period of time, in order to understand the choices made since the 2024 Olympic Games were awarded to Paris. With the legacy of this event becoming a central element in political discourse, education represents a key lever for development. By adopting a combined historical and sociological approach and studying, in an unprecedented way, the documentation produced by the Olympic authorities, our research has made it possible to grasp the challenges and organisational modalities, as well as the limits.

Indeed, while Olympism constitutes a discursive anchor point, it nonetheless remained very much in the background of school life in France during the second half of the 20th century. This situation was due as much to the caution shown by PE teachers as to the difficulty faced by the Olympic Movement to enact the values of Olympism. In this respect, it seems exaggerated to consider that Olympism has been able to spread throughout French schools and lead to the structuring of relationships with the practice of sport. This situation reveals the limits of the Olympic ideology in relation to the transformation of modern sport and the resistance of professionals in bodily education vis-à-vis the educational issues themselves, subjected to change in order to correspond to social needs.

This limit is all the stronger today, as Olympism seems to have lost its unquestionable cultural reference status over the last few years. It has in fact gone from the status of irrefutable rhetoric argument serving political projects in the development of sport to the status of normative reference in crisis, which feels the need to anchor itself to school in order to establish itself in the minds of the young. While the crisis of Olympism can be observed through the many protest movements towards the Olympic Games at an international level, it is also likewise perceived through the transformation of Olympic education as a way to survive as a cultural reference among the younger generations. It is no longer a question of surfing on the universal legitimacy of Olympism, but rather of preserving, even restoring it by convincing schoolchildren of its validity and preventing them from losing interest, once and for all, in the next 2024 Games. At sociological level, the crisis of Olympism is,

in some ways, similar to the crisis of institutions (Dubet 2002), i.e., in the difficulty faced in instituting individuals in the way they think and act. As at school, major sports events, such as the Olympic Games, in their own way produce ways of thinking and practising sport. And as at school, this socialisation endeavour is no longer able to continue, as it has begun to be the subject of social criticism. Consequently, in the same way as teachers must now convince, make themselves heard and justify themselves, Olympism is henceforth too strongly decried to be able to socialise without justifying itself. There exists therefore a true policy crisis against which the Olympic institution deploys a power *dispositif* consisting in reestablishing the Olympic model as a cultural reference model for the young generations. It has to show its sustainability at ecological level, as well as social and economic ones. It is a wager whose responsibility henceforth falls to an Olympic education that must call upon the school while remaining under the control of Olympic actors, such as the CNOSF.

However, if this project makes school a policy tool for defending an Olympic model, we have demonstrated that it remains dependent upon teachers' pedagogical conceptions of Olympism. While some use it as an aid for multidisciplinary learning by allowing the development of critical distancing where it is concerned, most of the projects are characterised by the absence of perspective, confining us to the unfiltered celebration of an indisputably virtuous model. In such cases, Olympic education establishes itself as a political project, taking the form of a power *dispositif* which, in the words of Foucault, makes it possible to "channel the behaviours" of the young generations who, it is hoped, will contribute to the success of the 2024 Games, as well as to preserving the model.

It thus appears important to continue this initial study during the organisation of the 2024 Games. It is indeed essential to analyse the effects of the Olympic education policies implemented, as well as their sustainability. While policymakers demonstrate the wish to mark history through the organisation of sustainable legacy, continuing this study should lead to an understanding of the effects on the social practices of the individuals targeted.

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¹ Comité Départemental Olympique Français (French Departmental Olympic Committee).

² Which formed part of the celebration activities for the centenary of P. de Coubertin's birth.

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