


## Olympic values education: The historical evolution of a pedagogy, review of Binder's 2012 article

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Leonardo Perovano-Camargo<sup>1</sup>

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### ABSTRACT

The article "Olympic Values Education: Evolution of a Pedagogy" by Deanna L. Binder (2012) explores the evolution of Olympic values pedagogy through three distinct curricular projects. The main focus of the research is the effective integration of Olympic values into formal education and the enhancement of associated pedagogical practices. The goal is to analyze how theoretical principles shape pedagogical practice and how these principles were applied in the creation of the International Olympic Committee's (IOC) Olympic Values Education Program (OVEP). The methodology used in the article is historical and descriptive, involving a detailed literature review and analysis of specific case studies. Binder argues that the pedagogical practices discussed provide a robust theoretical foundation for Olympic values education, highlighting the creation of the OVEP toolkit that guides the practical implementation of these values. The results indicate that the approach focused on the "lifeworld," which integrates Olympic values into students' daily experiences, is the most effective. However, the research points to the need for additional empirical data and a more critical analysis of the cultural challenges faced. The study concludes that, while Binder's work offers a significant contribution to the pedagogy of Olympic educational values (joy of effort; fair play; respect for others; pursuit of excellence; and balance between body, will, and mind), the addition of empirical data and a more critical analysis of cultural difficulties could strengthen the research. Critiques of the Olympic ideal and reflections on the paradoxes of Olympic values are also addressed, offering a critical and enriching perspective.

**Keywords:** Olympic pedagogy, Values education, Curriculum, Educational theory.

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<sup>1</sup> PhD in Physical Education  
Universidade Federal do Espírito Santo - UFES  
Vitória – ES – Brasil  
E-mail: leonardoperovano@gmail.com



## INTRODUCTION

The critical review is an essential tool for the dissemination and analysis of scientific knowledge, allowing for the evaluation and in-depth discussion of academic works (Machado, 1997). We present a critical review of the article "Olympic Values Education: Evolution of a Pedagogy," by Deanna L. Binder, published in 2012, which explores the evolution of the pedagogy of Olympic values, highlighting the importance of integrating these principles into educational projects. Binder argues that the legacy of Olympic education should serve as a bridge between the pursuit of excellence by elite athletes and the dreams of children.

This critical review aims to analyze the main points of the article and reflect on the contributions and limitations presented by Binder. The text is divided into sections that offer a chronological view of the evolution of Olympic values education programs, allowing the reader to follow the author's argumentative logic.

The methodology used by Binder is historical and descriptive, reviewing existing literature and analyzing specific case studies. An expanded empirical view of educators and program participants would provide a deeper perspective on the effectiveness of the pedagogical practices discussed.

The main contribution of the article is its ability to synthesize and analyze the evolution of the pedagogy of Olympic values. The author proposes that Olympic education should operate in the "lifeworld" of students, fostering positive transformations in their trajectories. Binder suggests that collective contributions to curriculum development have the potential to promote a robust theoretical foundation.

The article highlights the creation of the "toolkit" for the Olympic Values Education Program (OVEP) of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which aims to guide educators in the practical implementation of Olympic values. This practical proposal is one of the most relevant aspects of the work, demonstrating the applicability of the concepts discussed.

Among the limitations raised by the author is the approach to cultural difficulties in educational communication, highlighting differences in European values in other geographic regions, religious beliefs, political impositions, and subjective issues. The author emphasizes that the Olympic educational theme of "respect for others" has been widely accepted globally, finding equivalents in other cultures, such as the concept of "ubuntu" in Africa.

The author also discusses how Olympic values can be interpreted and adapted in different cultural contexts. For example, representatives of the South African committee related Olympic values to the concept of "ubuntu," while Chinese Olympic educators associated these values with the concept of 和合 (hé hé), which means peace, kindness, integration, and reconciliation.

Binder explores several pedagogical approaches to Olympic values education:



**Knowledge-oriented approach:** Focuses on the history and educational legacy of the Olympic Games, including information about the Ancient, Modern, and Contemporary Games, and emphasizes names, dates, and facts.

**Experience-oriented approach:** Provides experiences in "Olympic" festivals and competitions, promoting cooperation and international communication between educational institutions.

**Physical achievements-oriented approach:** Emphasizes individual and personal development through physical efforts and competitions, promoting systematic physical practices and training.

**Lifeworld-oriented approach:** Connects the social experiences of children and young people with sport, interpreting Olympic ideals as motivation for learning in all aspects of their lives.

The choice of the lifeworld-oriented approach (Naul, 2008) reflects Binder's pedagogical perception of the need to teach not only "what" should be learned but also "how" to teach these values meaningfully to students.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Binder adopts the concept of understanding, interpretation, and reflection proposed by Gadamer (1989), suggesting that practical application co-determines understanding. According to Gadamer, understanding is a process that involves interpretation and reflection, where practical application plays a crucial role.

Hans-Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics offers a profound perspective on the interpretation of texts and human understanding. In his major work, *Truth and Method*, Gadamer criticizes the objectivist and methodological approaches that predominated in traditional hermeneutics, proposing an approach that values dialogue, historicity, and the fusion of horizons between the interpreter and the text.

For Gadamer, understanding is not a merely technical process but a dynamic and participatory encounter between the reader and the text, where meaning emerges from the interaction between different temporal and contextual perspectives.

The examples addressed by Binder can be interpreted in light of Gadamerian hermeneutics to explore how the concepts and practices discussed reflect the fusion of horizons proposed by Gadamer. The curriculum projects can be analyzed through the following hermeneutical principles:

**Historicity and Context:** Gadamer emphasizes that understanding is shaped by the historical and cultural context of both the text and the interpreter. In Binder's work, the analysis of the context in which practices and theories are presented allows us to understand how these elements reflect and are influenced by specific historical and cultural times. Thus, historicity plays a crucial role in the



interpretation of the concepts.

**Fusion of Horizons:** Gadamer's idea that understanding occurs at the intersection of the horizons of the reader and the text is central to the analysis. The research should explore how the horizons of the author and the interpreter meet and influence each other. This may involve identifying how Binder's ideas engage with contemporary and earlier theoretical currents, as well as with the perspectives of readers or researchers.

**Dialectic of Questioning:** Gadamer values the dialectical process of continuous questioning in the pursuit of understanding. Binder's work can be seen as a space for critical and reflective questioning, where the analysis of the presented practices and theories not only answers questions but also raises new ones. This hermeneutical aspect allows for a richer evaluation of Binder's contributions to the field.

Applying Gadamerian hermeneutics provides a deeper insight into the practices and theories discussed, highlighting the importance of the interaction between the author and the interpretive context. The analysis should consider how the fusion of horizons and historicity influence the understanding of the presented concepts. Furthermore, the dialectical approach proposed by Gadamer offers a framework for the ongoing critical evaluation of the work, recognizing that understanding is an open and constantly evolving process.

The author argues that the personal subjective significance of Olympic values involves ethical choices and practical actions, integrating theory and practice in a dialectical manner, thus aligning with the theoretical framework chosen.

## METHODOLOGY

The methodology employed in the critical review of "Olympic Values Education: Evolution of a Pedagogy" by Deanna L. Binder (2012) follows a detailed analysis framework that aligns with the theoretical guidelines for organizing and producing critical reviews, as discussed by Machado (1997). To ensure a critical and systematic evaluation of the work, the adopted methodology encompasses the following aspects:

- **Structural Analysis of the Text:** The review begins with identifying the essential elements of Binder's article, including the objectives, the methodology used, the main findings, and the conclusions. The methodological approach is based on a critical review of the content and structure of the original article. The analysis considers how Binder presents the evolution of the pedagogy of Olympic values and the practical application of the discussed concepts.
- **Literature Review:** The methodology includes an extensive review of the relevant literature to contextualize Binder's work within the field of Olympic pedagogy. This

involves consulting academic and theoretical works that address related themes, such as the evolution of Olympic values, pedagogical approaches, and critiques of the Olympic ideal. This review is essential to place Binder's article within the broader academic debate and to identify possible gaps and significant contributions.

- **Review Structure:** Following Machado's (1997) guidelines, the critical review is structured to highlight the main sections of the article and provide a critical analysis of each. The methodology involves organizing the text into sections corresponding to: (a) Introduction and Contextualization; (b) Analysis of the Article's Methodology; (c) Discussion of Results and Conclusions; and (d) Criticisms and Suggestions for Improvements. Each section is addressed according to Machado's proposed sequence, emphasizing clarity and organization in presenting content.
- **Critique and Reflection:** The critical analysis of the article is conducted based on a reflection on the contributions and limitations of Binder's work. This includes a discussion of the adequacy of the historical and descriptive methodology used, the importance of including empirical data, and the relevance of the cultural critiques addressed. The critique section also incorporates analysis from other scholars, such as Wamsley and Heine (1996) and Parry (2003), to enrich the discussion and offer a more comprehensive perspective.
- **Philosophical and Theoretical Aspects:** The methodology includes a reflection on the philosophical implications of Olympic values, drawing on Gadamer's (1989) ideas on understanding and interpretation. The analysis considers how the concepts discussed by Binder are applied in pedagogical practice and how they can be interpreted in different cultural contexts.

The employed methodology aims to ensure a comprehensive and well-founded critical review that not only evaluates the quality and relevance of Binder's work but also contributes to the academic discussion on the pedagogy of Olympic values.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We present the summaries of the three projects developed and their culmination in the Olympic Education Toolkit proposed by the International Olympic Committee:

1. **"Come Together: The Olympics and You" (1987)** Developed for the 1988 Calgary Winter Olympics, this project aimed to create educational materials about the Olympic Games for all primary schools in Canada. Funded by the organizing committee, the project included teacher workshops and a school outreach program. Created in response



to a lack of knowledge about the Olympic Games beyond hockey, it sought to integrate Olympic information with existing school curricula.

- **Objective:** To increase understanding of the Olympic Games among Canadian children, particularly in Calgary, by providing an Olympic experience in schools.
- **Target Audience:** School-age children in Alberta and across Canada.
- **Main Issues:** How best to present the philosophy, history, and traditions of the Olympics to children? Alignment with Alberta Ministry of Education's policy for flexible integration of Olympic themes.
- **Theoretical Framework:** Based on Pierre de Coubertin's ideas to promote physical and moral qualities through sport and Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences pedagogical model.
- **Application:** Materials distributed before the Games allowed for the integration of Olympic themes into school plans, including festivals and school projects.
- **Critique:** While it received positive feedback from teachers and involved the Ministry of Education, the project was criticized for not emphasizing sports and physical activity, with criticisms about the superficiality of the approach to Olympic principles.

## 2. "Fair Play for Kids: A Handbook of Activities for Teaching Fair Play" (1988)

Developed by the Canadian Commission for Fair Play and distributed by the Canadian government, this handbook aims to promote values of fairness and fair play among children aged 8 to 12. The project emerged after the 1988 Olympics doping scandal, with the goal of encouraging the development of ethical values in sports and everyday life.

- **Objective:** To address the issue of doping and promote fair play; directed not only for physical education classes but also for other subjects.
- **Target Audience:** Canadian children aged 8 to 12.
- **Issues and Theoretical Approach:** Uses Kohlberg's theory of moral development to stimulate the resolution of moral conflicts and the understanding of ethical values.
- **Structure:** Organized into four themes: discussion of dilemmas, practical games and activities, historical exploration, and application of fair play in various areas.
- **Results and Critique:** Studies showed that the program improves children's moral development, but the handbook presents theoretical limitations, being criticized for not incorporating more comprehensive approaches to values education.

## 3. "Be a Champion in Life: An International Teacher's Resource Manual" (2000)

Developed by the Athens Foundation of Olympic and Sport Education (FOSE), this global manual aims to promote Olympic values through five main themes: physical activity, fair play, multiculturalism, pursuit of excellence, and the Olympic context.



Launched at the foot of Mount Olympus, the project aimed to reach children aged 8 to 12 in schools worldwide.

- **Issues and Theoretical Approach:** Challenges related to the relevance of Olympic values in non-Euro-American cultural contexts and the adequacy of proposed methodologies.
  - **Application and Methodology:** Includes activities and themes to promote Olympic values, but faced difficulties in implementation due to a lack of an effective promotion plan and criticism over the lack of encouragement for critical thinking.
  - **Critique:** Revealed tensions between Western pedagogies and local cultural traditions, highlighting the need to adapt educational resources to local cultural and educational realities.
4. **"Teaching Values: An Olympic Education Toolkit" (2007)** This manual from the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is part of the Olympic Values Education Program (OVEP). Developed to provide educational resources to developing countries, the toolkit is based on "Be a Champion in Life" and includes exclusive Olympic materials and photographs from the IOC archives.
- **Development:** Created after a meeting of experts in 2005, the toolkit focuses on five Olympic educational values: joy of effort; fair play; respect for others; pursuit of excellence; and balance between body, will, and mind. It aims to maintain young people's interest in sports and the adoption of the educational values of Olympism.
  - **Target Audience and Challenges:** Expanded to include youth aged 8 to 18, the toolkit faced challenges in integrating Olympic values into diverse school curricula, with a flexible approach for primary and secondary schools.
  - **Structure:** Includes sections on the introduction to Olympic values, celebration through symbols and ceremonies, sharing values in sports, and implementation tools.
  - **Critique:** It was criticized for its difficulty of use without adequate training and for not fully aligning with the traditional emphasis on sport, but was praised for its positive impact on active learning methodologies.

## INTERRELATIONSHIPS

The four projects share a common goal of promoting Olympic and educational values through pedagogical resources, but differ in their approaches and contexts of application.

"Come Together" and "Fair Play for Kids" focus on educating children about Olympic values and fair play, respectively. However, "Come Together" prioritizes integrating these values with





school curricula, while "Fair Play for Kids" emphasizes general moral development through diverse activities.

"Be a Champion in Life" and "Teaching Values" expand the focus to a global approach, promoting Olympic values in diverse cultural contexts. The former faces challenges related to cultural relevance and lack of promotion, while the latter offers flexibility for local adaptation but also faces criticism regarding the integration of values with pedagogical and sports practice.

These projects demonstrate an evolution in how Olympic values are presented and applied, with "Teaching Values" seeking to integrate previous experiences and provide a more comprehensive and adaptable approach to local needs.

### GENERAL CRITICISMS:

Binder acknowledges the criticisms received by Olympic education projects and uses them as a basis for future improvements. One major criticism is the idea that promoting the Olympic ideal can be seen as an "ideological inscription" (Wamsley & Heine, 1996), educating citizens for a pre-arranged future. However, the author argues that negative aspects can serve as a foundation for proposing improvements, as in the case of the "Fair Play for Kids" project, which was inspired by negative events at the Olympic Games.

The author also addresses the difficulties encountered in exporting the Olympic education model to different global realities. Individualistic concepts of Western pedagogy, such as the "pursuit of excellence," were not well received in Asian and African cultural traditions, where humility and community responsibility are more valued.

An interesting point to correlate with the review is Parry's (2003) analysis of the paradoxes of Olympic values. Parry argues that, to be universal, the principles of Olympism must be immutable but, at the same time, different everywhere and reflective of social changes. According to Parry, there are fundamental differences between the Ancient and Modern Games, and between Coubertin's revivalist ideas and current ones. Social ideas, embedded in social practices, depend on a specific social order for their meaning to be fully exemplified.

Parry suggests that the concept of Olympism should be understood at a general level, allowing for various interpretations. Thus, promoting Olympic values should be seen as an educational task, where sport is a means to achieve international cooperation, mutual respect, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. Multicultural education becomes essential to promote understanding and respect between different cultures, reflecting the idea that Olympic values can be adapted to specific cultural contexts, as highlighted by Binder.

Wamsley and Heine (1996) provide an incisive critique of the Olympic ideal, arguing that the codes of consumption established by the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and its supporters





manage a standardized and strategic cultural production. They highlight how Olympic ideologies are constantly adjusted to fit dominant political currents, creating a categorical structure of "circular ideas." This approach does not allow for an in-depth critique of the concepts and promotes a standardized meaning in events and tertiary programs.

The authors also address the reproduction of particular worldviews by the IOC and sports federations, perpetuating gender distinctions, patriarchal hierarchies, and the quantification of human efforts at the expense of health and safety. The legitimization of corporate ideologies and practices is obscured by a dominant discourse that invokes global harmony. Public resistance to these aspects, as in the case of the protest by the Lubicon Cree native peoples against the "The Spirit Sings" exhibition at the Glenbow Museum, during the preparations for the 1988 Winter Olympics, illustrates the tension between symbolic representation and the oppressive reality of cultural relations in Canada.

Wamsley and Heine argue that the Olympic experience is pre-constructed, from volunteers to the host community, through an intense educational program of Olympic discourse. This process of saturation with Olympic information transforms the perception of the event into a pre-designed ideology, obscuring contradictions and promoting homogeneous cultural consumption.

## CONCLUSION

Deanna Binder, in her article "Olympic Values Education: Evolution of a Pedagogy," makes a significant contribution to the field of Olympic values pedagogy by providing a deep and well-founded analysis of the evolution and application of these values in an educational context. Binder effectively articulates the importance of Olympic values and how they have been incorporated into various educational projects over time. Binder's research not only sheds light on the historical development of these projects but also offers a critical analysis of the pedagogical approaches adopted, enriching the understanding of the role of Olympic values in education.

However, the analysis could be further strengthened with the inclusion of more robust empirical data, which would provide a more concrete view of the real impacts of these projects on educational practices and student behavior. The lack of an in-depth empirical analysis limits the ability to assess the practical effectiveness of the pedagogical methods discussed. The integration of case studies and qualitative and quantitative data could enhance Binder's analysis, offering more tangible evidence of the contributions and challenges encountered in implementing Olympic values in various educational contexts.

The critique by Wamsley and Heine (1996) adds an essential critical layer to Binder's discussion, highlighting the inherent contradictions and the phenomenon of standardized cultural consumption promoted by the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Wamsley and Heine's perspective underscores how the Olympic ideology is often shaped and adjusted to fit dominant



political and cultural currents, leading to a form of "circular ideas" that does not allow for an in-depth critique of the underlying concepts. The critique also emphasizes how Olympic ideologies are often adjusted to meet the needs and interests of the IOC and its sponsors, perpetuating specific worldviews and social hierarchies.

Additionally, Parry's (2003) analysis of the paradoxes of Olympic values provides an enriching philosophical perspective. Parry argues that for Olympic values to be truly universal, they must be both immutable and adaptable to social and cultural changes. This duality highlights the complexity of promoting Olympic values in a diverse global context. Parry suggests that Olympic values should be understood at a general level that allows for multiple interpretations and that promoting these values should be an educational task that seeks international cooperation, mutual respect, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This philosophical perspective complements Binder's discussion, emphasizing the need for an educational approach that is sensitive and adaptable to specific cultural contexts.

Therefore, Binder's work represents a significant step in analyzing the educational values of Olympism but also points to the need for ongoing and in-depth research on how these values can be effectively integrated and applied in various educational contexts.



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