Sport and Olympism: Common issues, threats and opportunities
analysed by academic research

Working Document

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Sport and Olympism: Common issues, threats and opportunities analysed by academic research

1 Introduction
The Olympic Games differ markedly from other global sporting events in that they claim to have at their core a set of principles applicable not only in a sporting context but more broadly as a moral ideology for life. Kidd (1984) and Young (1987) contend that it was the ideals of Olympism, along with the founder’s organisational ability, that set Coubertin’s Games apart from earlier attempts to revive the ancient Olympics such as that at Much Wenlock in Shropshire, England. The ideals behind Olympism stem from several sources, including the ancient Olympics in Greece, the Victorian English public school system, American collegiate sport, late nineteenth century peace initiatives in Europe, the World Expositions of the late nineteenth century and the Ecole Libre of France (Guttmann, 1992).

In order to investigate the common issues, threats and opportunities connected to Olympism, it is important to define what is meant by the term. Clearly, Pierre de Coubertin had a specific view and interpretation of Olympism when he observed: „Olympism is not a system; it is a state of mind. The most diverse educational forms may be penetrated by it, and no one race or epoch can claim an exclusive monopoly of it“ (de Coubertin, 1918.).

Over recent decades, academics have sought to define Olympism in a manner that will enable more effective investigation of values and realities of Olympism and the promotion and implementation of policies and practices connected to it. The notion that the values of Olympism are “universal” has itself been qualified by the International Olympic Committee’s (IOC) continual updating of the Olympic charter over the past century, to adapt to the changing social climate and political pressures. Olympism can be viewed as an overarching social philosophy, “which emphasises the role of sport in world development, international understanding, peaceful co-existence, and social and moral education” (Parry, 2004: 9).

Here, Segrave’s (1988) model of Olympism can be used as a point of reference for a summary of existing academic research and further lines of investigation. He outlines seven key themes as central to Olympism: education; international understanding; equal opportunity; fair and equal competition; cultural expression; independence of sport; and excellence. Defined in this way, Olympism can be subject to greater scientific investigation; allowing researchers, in various contexts, to assess its reach and scope, impact and absence. In this regard, Maguire et al (2006; 2008) conclude that this assessment highlights the threats and opportunities faced in promoting Olympism.

Sporting culture has developed in various facets of communities and has made an enormous contribution to modern societies. Over the years, a variety of terms and definitions have been used when discussing sport but it can be understood in the broadest sense to include all sport activities from high-performance to recreational activities or sport for all. Marchand (1990: 3) presented the following definition: “Sport (…..) is to be understood in the modern sense of free, spontaneous physical activity engaged in during leisure time; its functions … being recreation, amusement and relaxation. Sport in this sense includes ‘sports proper’ and various other physical activities provided they demand some effort”. However, sport can also be understood in a more narrow sense, focusing on competitive and high-performance sport only. Despite differences in terminology and definition, two approaches can be identified to look at common themes of sport and Olympism:

Development of sport and Olympism; and
Development through sport and Olympism.

Although there is overlap between these approaches and thus a clear distinction cannot always be made, this report is structured along these two themes. Throughout past decades,
most research has focused on the development of sport and related issues. More recently, however, research focused on development through sport issues has gathered momentum (Right to Play, Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group Report, 2008). While the connection between these research topics and the Olympic Movement are complex, the interrelations between the core concerns of the Olympic Movement and more general questions of sport, physical activity and physical education are crucial to understanding the issues, threats and opportunities that exist.

Based on the definition of Olympism outlined above, this report will highlight selected issues and topics with the aim of identifying what knowledge base exists, what is still under investigation and what new lines of inquiry should be followed. While this report is not exhaustive, a range of topics are presented that are based on a preliminary review of recently published literature. Information has also been gained from presentations and discussions at international conferences and congresses, either of disciplinary or cross-/multidisciplinary nature. Given its preliminary nature, one of this report’s recommendations is that a more comprehensive overview be commissioned.

2 Development of Sport and Olympism

In this section, attention is given to several interrelated topics, each having features that provide challenges and opportunities with regard to the development of sport and Olympism. These topics include: sport participation across the lifespan; young people and socialisation into and through sport; girls, women and gender issues in sport; modern sports; talent identification and development - professional training; fair play; sport sponsorship and the media.

2.1 Sport participation across the lifespan

Research on participation has stemmed from a variety of questions including motivation in relation to competitive sport; a change of goal orientation in the individual lifespan; and physical activity as a modern response to a work environment that favours sedentary lifestyles, which links closely with global health concerns. Inevitably, different scientific disciplines such as physical education, coaching science, sports medicine and sport sociology as well as thematic areas including health-enhancing physical activity, are dealing with questions of participation. Some of these questions focus on:

- The best starting time to become physically active;
- Parental influences;
- Changes in motivation (intrinsic/extrinsic);
- Active-friendly environments;
- Gender-related issues;
- Relationships between event consumption and participation;
- Masters’ programmes; and
- Physical activity and health.

Scientists agree that children should become acquainted with physical activity and education as early as possible, ie before they start school. There are, however, different opinions regarding the role that parents take in relation to the motivation of their children to be physically active or participate in sports. Smith and Biddle (2008) say that it is of highest importance that parents make participation possible, eg by driving their children to training, while other studies indicate that the best results for sport participation can be reached when parents actually participate with their children. Additionally, a mission of in-school physical education is to motivate pupils to become physically active and practice sport and while world-wide research exists on in-school physical education, out-of-school physical education has not received the same level of interest.

Simultaneously, analysis should continue on how living and work environments, along with sporting structures, influence participation in sport and activity behaviour. There is evidence that an active-friendly environment has a positive impact on physical activity participation.
While there are no conclusive results to indicate that watching athletes in a high-calibre sporting event can influence an individual’s behaviour, there are examples where an event has motivated people of different age groups to try out for the sport they have witnessed. Likewise, there is proof that successful athletes can function as role models. However athletic success is not the only factor that stimulates emulation. The type of sport, the appearance of the athlete and his or her presentation in the media are factors that have an impact on the reaction of the audience.

Additionally, surveys in the 1980s suggested that motivation to participate in sport programmes changes during the lifespan, namely from extrinsic motivation of adolescents to more intrinsic motivation of adults. The development of masters’ sport can be examined from this perspective. There is evidence that achievement goals alter throughout the lifespan but it is unknown what causes these changes. This knowledge would help to develop motivational strategies for athletes in different age groups.

Understandably, there is no data available yet on what impact the Youth Olympic Games may have on participation. This should be added to the research agenda of the future as it would be helpful to know how the Games will influence:

- Beginning of training;
- Sporting career;
- Athlete’s health;
- Physical, psychological and educational development;
- Social and cultural awareness;
- Retirement from high-performance sport;
- Out-of-sport-career of the athlete; and
- Impact of role models on children and adolescents.

There is a need for scientific research from different disciplinary perspectives.

The worldwide increase of obesity in children and youth has led to several international surveys and publications, a most recent one edited by Hills et al (2007) entitled “Children, Obesity and Exercise-Prevention, Treatment and Management of Childhood and Adolescent Obesity”. This publication presents data as well as a guide to manage youth obesity and its related issues.

Changes in lifestyle amongst young people in many parts of the world have caused new challenges and are being addressed in international comparative studies (eg Naul, 2003).

2.2 Young people and socialisation into and through sport

Numerous studies exist that focus on young people’s involvement in sport. Most of them present data collected in a particular country concerning lifestyle changes, participation rates in organised sport, drop-out rates and motives etc. National surveys, such as the “SPRINT-Studie” (DSB, 2004) and international studies including the “SpinEd project” (Bailey et al, 2004) have provided valuable information concerning the attitudes and activities of young people in a sport context. Hardman presents a summary of current developments and emphasises “with the concept of globalisation, renewed interest has arisen in international dimensions of physical education and sport with varying engagement of inter-governmental agencies, national and regional governments and international, national and regional non-governmental organisations as well as a range of social and educational institutions and individuals involved in either overarching or specific development initiatives” (2008: 389).

There is a need to put together current data on developments and trends in youth sport, an initiative that the IOC recently started with the support of international research experts. In this context, it would be constructive to compare these new findings with the results of the international survey on “Worldwide Trends in Youth Sport” (De Knop et al) published in 1996. The information collected could help develop new approaches and could also be connected
to the innovative concept of the Youth Olympic Games to be held for the first time in Singapore in 2010.

Amongst the issues and topics that have currently been addressed in youth research are:
- violence prevention through sport;
- intercultural learning and sport, “integration through sport”;
- disadvantaged youth and sport;
- young people with disability and sport;
- sport participation and modern technology;
- informal practice of sport; and
- trend sports.

Another specific focus of experts with different professional backgrounds is talent identification and development in sport. Within this field, an under-researched area – from an international and national perspective – has been identified and is now being addressed, that is talent identification and development in disability sport.


Another important research issue that has been addressed in several studies is that of combining an athletic career with the educational demands of young people, eg Heim and Richartz (2003).

While information is available concerning the “work load” of young athletes and the risks that are connected to it, research is lacking with regard to the health risks for the individual, attitude and behaviour regarding injuries, the long-term impact of chronic physical and psychological stress and the specific role that coaches play in this context. More recently, new approaches have been developed to ensure a successful combination of sporting and academic careers after school, eg for university students.

2.3 Girls, women and gender issues in sport
An excellent overview of current developments and findings regarding participation of girls and women in sport is given in the 2008 September issue of the ICSSPE Bulletin, which focused on “Women, Sport and Social Change”. Articles in this issue include:
- Women, Sport and Social Change (Kluka);
- Developing Women in Sport to Lead Social Change (Hums and Pastore);
- Improving Inclusion: International Declaration for Muslim Women “Accept and Respect” 2008, (Benn and Koushki-Jahromi); and
- Can you be an Agent of Change? Making a Difference through Advocacy (Talbot).

The volume addresses various issues related to participation in sport, eg gender equality/equity, cultural barriers, empowerment through sport, media coverage, women in leadership positions, changes in policies etc. In this context, it is important to highlight the outcomes of the IOC World Conferences on Women and Sport, the last one being held in Jordan in March 2008 focusing on “Sport as a Vehicle for Social Change “ and the continuous efforts being made be the IOC Women and Sport Commission.

A summary of scientific studies with regard to “Sport, Women and Leadership” is provided in Congress Proceedings by Doll-Tepper, Pfister, Scoretz and Bilan (2005) addressing issues, such as “Women, Leadership and the Olympic Movement” (White), “Coaching – A Gendered
Profession?” (Ottesen), “The Social Construction of Disability” (Olenik) and “Gender Relations in Chinese Elite Sport” (Dong). Meier provides important information on gender equity, sport and development and raises questions concerning scientific approaches from national or transnational viewpoints. She states that “it is important that Western perspectives are identified as such and constantly questioned to avoid ethnocentric perspectives.” (2005: 22).

A review of the most recent developments and findings is presented by Kluka (2008) entitled “Women and Sport” in the “Directory of Sport Science” (Borms, 2008). The dissemination of these most recent findings to a broader public is necessary to expand understanding of the role of women in sport.

A milestone document in the context of women and sport is the Brighton Declaration (International Working Group on Women and Sport, 1994), which includes a framework in the following areas:

- equity and equality in society and sport;
- facilities;
- school and junior sport;
- developing participation;
- high performance sport;
- leadership in sport;
- education, training and development;
- sports information and research;
- resources; and
- domestic and international cooperation.

It is also important to highlight the adoption by the IOC of a consensus statement on “Sexual harassment and abuse in sport” (IOC, 2007).

UNESCO, in co-operation with the Greek Government, has created an Observatory of Women, Sport and Physical Education. This web-based observatory is meant to gather, analyse, organise and disseminate information world-wide to promote the integration of gender issues within the policies of sport; and to raise awareness of the importance of a safe and healthy environment for women involved in sport.

2.4 Modern Sports – Traditional Sports

With regard to a common and broad understanding of sport as defined above, different sport science disciplines look at the development of sports over time. Sport historians describe and analyse the implementation of sports, how they spread and how they undergo changes, whereas sport sociologists analyse the interrelations between sport and societies in various areas.

The development of some sports has been well described, from an historical and sociological point of view, which has eventually led to the different classification of sports, eg modern, Western, global and traditional sports.

Some of these “modern” sports have their origins more than centuries or millennia ago, but they are called modern because they are still practiced. An example is athletics. Many modern sports can also be called global as they have spread almost across the entire world through the Olympic movement, international federations and the media. Moreover, many of these modern global sports may be called “Western” sports as their origins go back to European traditions.

The described classification has lead to an imbalance between different sports and groups of sport, which has fostered research and other activities such as lobbying, in order to defend
their role or place in the sporting arena. Competition between these groups has resulted, eg within the Olympic sports but also between “global”, “modern” and “Western” sports on one side and “traditional” sports on the other. When we describe traditional sports, we refer to a group of sports that are threatened with extinction, replaced by other sports or other activities outside of sport. International agencies such as UNESCO support initiatives that aim to preserve these traditional games and sports, and other organisations and individuals emphasise the importance of them for a specific purpose, eg because they allow an increased participation numbers (eg Renson & Meulders, 2005, and Maguire, 2005) or because of their impacts on social circumstance and health-enhancing physical activity behaviour.

Scientists like Maguire suggest that there is a close link between globalisation and the change of behaviour in sport (Maguire, 1999), while Renson raises the question “whether globalisation of sport prevents people from being physically active because (a) traditional sports are disappearing and (b) modern sports are not accessible for certain groups of the society?” Lobbying for the support of traditional sport is also undertaken by the global sport for all movement that argues participation has a positive impact on the health of society. Renson adds that “indeed, at the height of the global sportisation wave, alternative attempts to preserve and revivify the diversity of the ludic cultural heritage are seen on both a local and an international level” (Renson, 2004: 17). DaCosta (2004) presented results of an international investigation “Mapping Worldwide Trends of Traditional Sports and Games” (2004: 28-35) and stated that new trends of promotion and preservation have emerged.

Pfister (2004) presented an overview of research findings and trends in “Games of the Past – Sport for the Future?” in which globalisation, diversification and transformation are discussed by researchers from various backgrounds.

Research into the development of “modern” and “traditional” sports is undertaken for a vast number of reasons. Currently, the question of participation is high on the agenda, that is, participation of different peoples of the world in the international sport movement as well as participation of social groups like women, the elderly and low income groups etc. Due to ongoing engagement of the international sport movement, eg through the organisation of international mega-events in less developed areas (FIFA World Cup 2010, Olympic Winter Games 2014 etc.), there are continuously strong demands for research into what extent they influence activity behaviour and participation.

In this context, the Sport for All Movement plays an important role both at the national and international levels, eg as presented by Palm (1991) in his publication “Sport for All – Approaches from Utopia to Reality”.

In 2008, the UNESCO-TAFISA Declaration on the preservation of traditional games and sport was signed in Busan, Korea. In the lead up to presentation of this Declaration, sport historians, sport sociologists and others discussed to what extent global sports – which are to a large extent also Olympic sports – influence participation in physical activity and sport in general and traditional sports in particular. Traditional games and sports that are practised in certain regions within a special cultural context are considered to facilitate involvement in physical activity and sport and they should be considered as important elements of sport and physical education programmes.

2.5 Talent identification and development - professional training

Despite overall changes towards more professionalisation in training, there are a few clearly visible trends when it comes to identification and development of young athletes:

- Professional training starts at an earlier age;
- Coaching theory is not just applicable to elite sport but also to sport for all and health sport;
- Professional training uses more and more technology;
• Concern regarding the overall development of an athlete is rising; and
• Specialisation in a single sport is being postponed.

It is observable that specialised systematic training of children starts at an earlier age. This includes the use of equipment, technological and scientific supervision as well as preparation of coaches.

The use of technology to optimise performance and objective results in specific areas of the athlete’s development can lead to less attention being paid to the development of the athlete as a whole. Young athletes are not only under observation from coaches and parents but also team physicians. Among their tasks is the development of athletes’ profiles based on monitoring and evaluation. In doing so, specific strengths and weaknesses can be identified, which allow individualised training programmes. On a more scientific level, researchers deal with injury prevention by looking at different body parts or at injuries that are likely to occur in specific sports such as ankle, knee, hamstring, groin, shoulder, elbow injuries, head and cervical spine injuries and others. The main objective should be to develop a long-term research programme on injury prevention, including studies on basic epidemiology, risk factors, injury mechanisms and intervention studies. Research on the influence of increasing use of technology on the overall development of athletes is also needed.

Several expert groups with different motivations have raised the issue that programmes for athlete development need to have a holistic view on the adolescent. This means that advisers like parents, coaches, teachers and others need to address secondary education and professional careers as well. Although this need has been identified by athletes themselves, responsible coaches as well as by a few scientists, there is no recent academic work known that compares and analyses the overall development of elite athletes under different sport and education structures.

Research, eg in Canada (Higgs, 2008) and Australia (Gulbin, 2008) suggests that for some sports, later specialisation after participating in multi-disciplinary sport programmes is more likely to increase performance than early specialisation. However, there has been only limited research done so far and it is suggested that a broader approach is required.

In the fields of talent identification and development, future academic research will be needed on the revolution in microelectronics. With more sophisticated and attainable electronic means, the desire to objectify training processes is increasing. It is assumed that in the near future there will be non-invasive ways to analyse anaerobic exercise as it is already done for aerobic.

Research is also needed to examine the retreat of governments from direct involvement in the pursuit of achievement in sport, with commercial firms taking their place and from the educational point of view, the promotion of Olympic Education should be accompanied by the construction of teaching curricula, syllabus, teaching materials and other materials.

2.6 Fair play
The thematic area of fair play covers a broad range of issues from legal and ethical to educational, which have implications for other areas of sport science, eg biomedical sciences.

An essential element of sport, in general, and of Olympic sport, in particular, is respecting rules and fair play. Awards are presented by sport organisations and governments to celebrate those who have shown ethical behaviour in sport and the fight against doping is the number one priority for sport, as IOC President Dr. Rogge and many representatives of sport have often stated.

Medical, legal, educational and ethical aspects of doping have been discussed during the past years. The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and National Anti-Doping Agencies
have produced educational material in addition to extensive information on what is permitted and what is prohibited, eg anti-doping lists that are constantly being revised. Sport organisations in many countries around the world are working together with schools and other educational institutions, as well as with sport schools, to raise awareness. Research activities need to cover drug usage for performance enhancement as well as for physical restoration.

WADA, in collaboration with expert groups, has also addressed the threat of gene doping over recent years. Progress has been made to understand and detect gene-based doping. Additionally, research is carried out on the genetic and physiological effects that gene doping has, as well as technologies for genetic enhancement. This highlights another area where anti-doping interest should be considered, that is, research regarding genetic treatment as it is very likely that these results are also used for performance enhancement.

With alteration in social and personal value systems that occur parallel to global economic developments and the existence of commercial research institutions, it is of importance to observe changes regarding the acceptance of the abuse of the athlete’s body. Simultaneously, public reactions to all developments in doping strategies need to be observed.

Fair play is also challenged by other developments such as talent trafficking and the abuse of athletes. Another threat has been corruption, resulting in the implementation of ethics commissions at international and national levels to address the issue. Schenk (2007) states: “Bribing of judges and decision makers, betting scandals, corruption regarding the construction of sport infrastructure, sponsors trying to influence sport decisions such as nominations and, above all, secret doping networks demonstrate the wide range of possibilities in which sport can be corrupted.” (2007). She concludes: “So time has come now for a new coalition against corruption with the sport organisations on the one hand and the anti-corruption movement on the other” (2007).

2.7 Sport sponsorship and the media

Sport management is a constantly growing academic discipline that evokes research activities world-wide. As such, it deals with various tasks; it analyses activities and facilitates the production and marketing of sports services. It provides knowledge for the development of strategies and leadership for sport organisations. Strategies include financial, sponsorship, marketing as well as strategies to influence consumers’ behaviour. Because of its very diverse nature, it deals with a variety of issues, such as the economic value creation of sport, types of sport and athletes; marketing and branding; the parallel existance of professionals and volunteers; the impact of supranational policies and legislation; changes in technology and administration; and last but not least, in funding strategies.

The relationship between tourism and sport has become an economic as well as political issue. Several international and national studies on the economic impact of the sports industry have been conducted, proving the growing impact on economy. Tracking these changes in the future will deliver important arguments for different stakeholders in sports to present to the political and corporate sectors.

Although sponsoring in sport and media relations are two different topics, they overlap significantly in parts. With a growing interest in media coverage and broadcast rights and resultant revenues, media relations have been for a long time a major issue in the business of sport. The coverage of sport events competes on one hand with other TV genres, and within the world of sport, different types of sport strive for increasing coverage times. Hence, extensive research has been conducted on marketing and communication strategies. Due to a changing environment which influences the consumers’ behaviour and the ongoing development of sport disciplines there will, however, be a continuous need for monitoring and evaluation as well as research.
International studies have examined the influence of different stakeholders on media coverage of sports, events and athletes in different media. Besides other activities, they analyse content and format of the news coverage. Compared to the existing variety of sports, the number of topics and sports that are covered in the media is relatively small. In order to facilitate the development of sustainable structures parallel to short-term increase in profit, it is suggested to analyse consequences of a broader focus on sports, sport events, sponsorship as well as media coverage, along with analysis and comparison of sponsorship policies world-wide.

In trying to stay an international movement, the IOC is dependent on the media as a means of spreading the Olympic message, and is enmeshed in a wider political economy that funds the growth of the Games (Barney et al, 2002; Whitson, 1998). Evidence suggests that the values of Olympism are absent in media coverage and advertising (Maguire, Butler, Barnard and Golding, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c) which is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

3 Development through Sport and Olympism
Over the past years there has been an increasing awareness that sport in its broadest sense can be a means for development (Right to Play, Sport for Development and Peace, International Working Group Report, 2008). The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the year 2005 as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education (IYSPE 2005), “…in recognition of the important role that sport and physical education can play at the individual, community, national and global levels to promote education, health, development and peace….. IYSPE 2005 sought to emphasise the role of sport and physical education as additional tools to assist in the overall efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), economic and social development, improve public health and peace at the national and global levels.” (UN Report, 2005: 22).

Important initiatives and projects were carried out during 2005, which created a new momentum in the area of development through sport. A clear link to Olympism can be identified: “Olympism aims at the political goal of a peaceful internationalism. We have already drawn attention to the emerging relationship between the Olympic Movement and the United Nations, two global organisations facing similar problems in regard to universality and particularity. The general problem faced by both is how they are to operate at a global (universal) level whilst such differences at the particular level exist” (Parry, 2008: 12).

Research in the thematic area of development through sport is mainly done in related sport science disciplines such as sports medicine, physical education, sport sociology, sport psychology, adapted physical activity, sports management and others.

A strong public focus lies on the relationship between sport and health, especially on combatting non-communicable diseases and HIV/AIDS.

Despite the fact that national and international sport organisations have been involved in development projects for decades, the public attention that sport receives for its potential to contribute to social and economic development is relatively new. In November 2003, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted a resolution on sport as a means to promote education, health, development and peace. A task force with several UN agencies was created to convey the inclusion of sport and physical activity into their respective mandates. When the year 2005 was proclaimed as the International Year of Sport and Physical Education, the former Swiss President Adolf Ogi was appointed to a newly created position of Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Sport for Development and Peace. Sport and Physical Activity were recognised as a means to contribute to reaching the Millennium Development Goals and UNESCO relocated Sport and Physical Education from the Education to the Human and Social Science Sector of their organisation.
Research in the field of development through sport itself is undertaken often on the basis of empirical social research and mainly with regard to:

- fundamental research including topics such as reasons and consequences of the loss of orientation and virtues due to social change and how sport structures may contribute to problem solving;
- the development of monitoring and evaluation tools to accompany and to analyse their outcomes; and
- case studies that describe and analyse the implementation and results of specific projects.

There are again different areas where future academic research should focus:

- interference of (global) economic and sport development;
- relationships between sport and social development on national and local levels;
- sport and societal health; and
- sport in conflict and post-conflict areas.

For the future, research is suggested to continue evaluating and guiding policy development.

3.1 Sport in developing countries and regions

Issues of sport in developing countries and regions have been addressed by a large number of authors focusing on aspects such as social inclusion, social cohesion, the role and impact of mega sport events, such as the FIFA World Cup and Olympic Games, and others. It should be noted that very diverse, sometimes controversial approaches exist that highlight positive and/or negative impacts. A very comprehensive collection of projects has been published in the context of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005, proclaimed by the United Nations: “Sport for a Better World – Report of the International Year of Sport and Physical Education 2005” (UN Geneva, 2006).

The contribution of sport is highlighted in the context of the Millennium Development Goals, with special emphasis on sport and education, sport and health, sport and development and sport and peace. Despite the fact that a large number of initiatives and projects in sport exist in developing countries, concerns are expressed with regard to the sustainability of the projects, the environmental challenges (climate change) and specific problems related eg to the so-called “talent drain”, which means that young talents in sport are identified in developing countries and then “hired” by sport clubs etc. in developed countries.

International organisations like the IOC, National Olympic Committees and other organisations are undertaking efforts to assist in the development of sport and the promotion of volunteering and active citizenship. A detailed scientific approach has recently been presented by Coalter (2008) in his article “The FIFA World Cup and Social Cohesion: Bread and Circuses or Bread and Butter” (ICSSPE Bulletin, May 2008), in which he concludes: “On the basis of current research evidence the general conclusion is that using the World Cup to increase social cohesion will require, like competing in the World Cup, sustained hard work, based on a coherent strategy and an understanding of the importance of tactics… and even then you might not win all your games” (Coalter, 2008).

Chappell (2007) presents an overview of sport and political systems in developing countries, in particular, in Latin America, East Africa and Southern Africa. It offers a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between sport and political systems, the links and connections between these countries and the “developed” countries and international sport organisations.

3.2 Inclusion and sustainability

Many researchers have addressed issues of sport related to integration and inclusion. This has been done by scientists of different professional backgrounds, eg education, psychology, sociology, history to name but a few. A very interesting multi-disciplinary approach has been
One of the most recent topics around inclusion, in this case in high performance sport, has been the Oscar Pistorius case. Controversial positions were explained by asking whether or not Oscar Pistorius should be excluded from the Olympics (Edwards, 2008: 112-125). “Due to a congenital condition, he was born without fibulae – the long bones beneath the knee joint. So his legs were amputated just below the knee when he was 11 months old. … He is able to run with the aid of J-shaped prostheses which are made from carbon fibre and are called ‘blades’ – hence his other nick-name, ‘blade runner’. (Edwards, 2008: 114). Being a successful Paralympic athlete, Pistorius tried to achieve success in the Olympics, but did not reach this goal because he did not qualify. However, controversy arose in the international world of sport, discussing if his blades would give him an unfair advantage over his competitors. It is interesting to note that the issue of inclusion has been discussed for several decades within the multi-disciplinary area of Adapted Physical Activity (Sherrill, 2004; DePauw and Gavron, 2005). However, the Oscar Pistorius case raised sports medical, biomechanical, legal and ethical concerns in a broader context of sport. This topic will continue to be discussed. Van Hilvoorde and Landeweerd state: “…there seems to be a sharp contrast between the athlete and the disabled persons that need extra attention and care, the one incorporating the peak of normality, human functioning at its best, the other often representing the opposite. The concepts of ‘talent’ and ‘handicap’, however, bear certain family resemblances. Both concepts of dis-ability and super-ability are based on deviations from standards of normality” (2008: 98).

Inclusive approaches are also being discussed in the context of cultural diversity. Countries and regions in many parts of the world have become multi-cultural societies and sport is an important element in the lives of people that can contribute to mutual understanding and respect. This is clearly being reflected in the fundamental principles of Olympism such as tolerance, mutual respect, universality and solidarity. The IOC President Dr. Rogge in May 2007 addressed threats to achieving these goals and he particularly mentioned violence and racism.

Many sport organisations and governments have therefore developed and introduced new concepts to build upon the positive values of sport in order to reduce all forms of violence and racism. The implementation of appropriate means in this context will also need scientific work, eg in evaluating and assessing success or failure of these programmes. It is recommended to use mid- and long-term strategies to ensure sustainability. In addition, it is important to build and re-construct sport facilities in such a way that they allow for inclusive participation, eg through accessibility for all.

3.3 Social cohesion
The role of sport, Olympic sport and Olympic Games and their contribution to peace-building processes and social cohesion have been studied extensively. Distinctions need to be made between developments that occur eg in the context of Olympic Games and Paralympic Games and the “hard” and “soft” legacies that can be identified after the events. “Hard” legacies include eg the various sport facilities and their use; “soft” legacies include sustainable changes in attitudes and lifestyles and an enhanced social cohesion, eg of people with different cultural backgrounds, in a community, of improved integration of persons with a disability to name but a few. Sport in general is understood as an agent for social change and as a powerful tool for positive developments in societies.

Issues like these are being addressed by experts from various backgrounds, identifying both the positive and negative aspects. Keim (2006) describes “Sport as an opportunity for community development and peace-building in South Africa” and she states: “In the context of South Africa’s recent history sport has been used as a ‘tool for forgiveness’. Let’s now use
it as a means for community development and peace-building in a holistic way” (Keim, 2006: 105).

Social and economic inequalities, cultural and religious barriers have also been identified which hinder inclusion and social cohesion. Maguire (2006) contrasts the positive achievements with problematic developments: “Global consumer sport imposes its cultural products to vulnerable communities across the globe.” (Maguire, 2006: 110). The synergies between sport and development, in particular, with regard to social cohesion processes need to be analysed in more depth.

Disasters frequently impact on the most vulnerable members of society. The devastating tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004 awakened a new consciousness of the impact of disasters around the world. After the tsunami, the sporting community started new initiatives to provide assistance to the countries affected in the re-construction process and in re-building a sporting infrastructure.

An academic contribution has only recently been made toward identifying the role and impact of physical activity and sport in post-disaster invention, which is a new area for multi-disciplinary approaches (Henley and Colliard, 2005; ICSSPE, 2008).

The Olympic Movement has demonstrated great interest in and commitment to assisting developing countries and particularly in aid and humanitarian assistance. Olympic Solidarity was established in 1966 and has continuously provided financial and administrative assistance to athletes and officials from developing countries. The Olympic Truce is an excellent example of the IOC’s commitment to the promotion of peace through sport.

Olympic Aid, created by the IOC after the 1994 Winter Olympic Games, has recently become “Right to Play” which uses Olympians as Ambassadors to promote and develop sport in communities in need. Academic research in these areas is still in its early stages, however, it is important to create a scientific evidence base for sport programmes using appropriate evaluation tools and assessment in order to identify the relationship between sport and trauma and sport and social cohesion.

Another challenge is the contradiction that occurs between the ideals of internationalism and participation on the one hand, and individualism and nationalism on the other, ie. fostering inter-cultural communication and emotional identification while faced with rivalry to secure as high a position on a medal table which itself may engender nationalistic sentiments.

4 Physical Education – Olympic Education
Enormous efforts have been made during recent decades to draw the public’s attention to the critical situation of physical education in most countries in the world. The IOC supported a world-wide survey on the state and status of physical education (Hardman and Marshall, 2000) and World Summits have been organised by ICSSPE in Berlin (Germany), 1999 and in Magglingen (Switzerland) in 2005. Updated information has been provided more recently (Hardman, 2008) that clearly indicates that physical education in schools has been pushed into a defensive position. Experts around the world have reached consensus that this is an international problem which requires international action. Therefore the issue has been taken up in the “Berlin Agenda for Action for Government Ministers” adopted by MINEPS III in 1999 and again addressed at MINEPS IV in 2004.

The Magglingen Commitment of 2005 again addressed the need for action on international, national and local levels. However, the situation has not improved. Despite the importance of sport in public life there is relatively little support for physical education.

This is considered to be a contradiction, since physical education is an essential element of an holistic education. It can be an ideal means for lifelong physical activity and sport
participation with positive impacts on national health budgets. It could also serve as an ideal means for talent identification and it could offer opportunities to include ethical issues as well as health aspects (nutrition, activity vs. inactivity) into physical education classes.

Moreover, it could address issues related to inclusion (children with disabilities, children with different cultural backgrounds etc.) and put these approaches into practice. Researchers have addressed these topics in national and international surveys and have made recommendations for implementation – with little success so far!

International surveys such as PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) have focused only on reading and mathematical competencies/literacy, with the physical domain being excluded.

Recently, concepts have been developed that highlight the importance of “physical literacy” (Whitehead, 2004) as part of an overall development process of young people, an important contribution to addressing the need for including it all education programmes and in international student surveys.

Physical education is still seen as a marginal area of education although national and local governments responsible for education and health continue to complain about the risks of inactivity and the rise of obesity amongst young people.

Another issue that needs to be addressed here is that in many National Olympic Committees and National Olympic Academies, as well as in the International Olympic Committee and in the International Olympic Academy, the importance of Olympic Education is being emphasised, however, in many cases, the link is missing between physical education and Olympic education.

Very recently, Grupe (2008) criticised the lack of introducing Olympic education as part of physical education, both with regard to schools and in teacher preparation. It is recommended to raise awareness about the importance of Olympic education within the school curriculum and in teacher and coach training programmes.

On a more positive note, many countries have been and are producing teaching material with regard to Olympism and Olympic values, in particular, in the context of Olympic and Paralympic Games. These include China, Germany, Australia and many more.

5 Conclusion
Despite the attention given to challenges and threats around sport and Olympism, existing research in different areas of expertise shows the enormous potential and opportunities of sport. Whilst sport can, undoubtedly, have positive impacts on the individual, on communities and on society, in general, it is important to further describe current and future challenges.

This paper addresses selected topics and issues related to Sport and Olympism, summarises findings, positions and policy developments. In addition, recommendations and suggestions are being made for further research.

Based on this report it is recommended that the IOC and the international sport science community take initiative on several levels:

• commission more indepth reports on the common issues, threats and opportunities that impact Sport and Olympism;
• use this information to outline a programme of action;
• engage in continuous dialogue with experts in key academic areas; and
• develop policy recommendations with accompanying budgets for implementation, reflective of the identified opportunities and programme of action.
Bibliography


