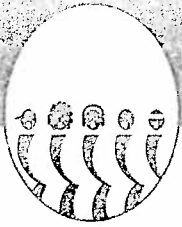




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**THE FRAGMENTED NATURE
OF EUROPEAN SCHOOL PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND SPORT**

Sport is not an integral part of mainstream education in most European schools and as a result is inadequate as an education tool.

Gymnastics for example, is an activity that is practically devoid of pedagogical content and is reduced to being a secondary activity that is not connected to the overall educational process. The modern school system does not have real substance and absorbs the students' leisure time through the implementation of a static curriculum.

How can this situation be changed? In what way can the Olympic family intervene in a case which seems to be the sole responsibility of governments? And how can this intervention be effective? There is much more that needs to be done in this area.

The fragmented nature of physical education and sport in European schools is a cause in the decline in interest of youth sport.

In most European countries people identified with sports only in terms of isolated circumstances when athletes were selected to take part in the Olympic Games.

In such cases official state support was offered to these athletes only in terms of furthering nationalism. Aside from this, sport was not an inspirational movement, nor was it an issue of importance for the state. It goes without saying that we cannot have great athletes without a highly developed physical education and sport system.

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for example, is an activity that is practically devoid of pedagogical content and is reduced to being a secondary activity that is not connected to the overall educational process. The modern school system does not have real substance and absorbs the students' leisure time through the implementation of a static curriculum.

The enthusiasm of students for sport, in junior and high schools is dropping. With no outlet through which students can express their competitive spirit, the school curriculum becomes weaker and as a result is lacking in its response to the children's need for play and activity. Apart from the fact that there is not enough "sports education" or promotion of "lifelong exercise" in most schools, the fact is that we are placing unnecessary restriction on a young person's natural inclination to move.

Most school buildings do not meet standard requirements, not even in terms of providing a simple playing area. In addition to the fact that proper conditions for the harmonious integration of sports in school do not exist, students are often treated as old people.

Elementary and secondary education represents a decisive period in a child's life. In addition to their intellectual development they are also at a stage of discovering their physical self. The education they receive, which burdens them with obligations and fragmented knowledge in order to prepare for an uncertain future, does not take into account or respect their need for physical education.

Sport is a valuable resource for the transmission of principles. Its absence will hit society at some point in time. It is only through Olympic education that present-day phenomena such as violence, hooliganism, racism, doping, xenophobia and corruption in sport can be tackled. These phenomena are not restricted to sport and also have a social impact. By failing to provide public sports education, the state reveals its lack of concern and sense of responsibility.

The absence of physical exercise in public schools in European society is unfair and unprofitable. Instead of being improved, however, it has become the rule. Soon, children will be unable to climb stairs or will be too bored to move. Young people will have lost contact with nature and their body and will lack the ability to establish a connection between the two. They will forget the usefulness and cease to use their body parts.

They will rely on cars to take them around, computers will replace playing and cities will replace the playground, while machines will replace hands and feet. Modern society and our technological culture have substituted machines for the human body. The limbs of children become weak and atrophied as they will no longer have any use for them.

There is still hope of upgrading the role of education and providing good general knowledge to youth in order to influence their thinking,

communication as well as appreciation for music, art and sport. This can only be done by introducing change and setting objectives in order to realise this vision.

"Education" is, anyway, a broader concept which can be carried out through other means. If public education is governed by merit, by extension its ethical values will be disseminated to our youth as these concepts are interrelated. So, what applies in the social sphere also applies to sports. It goes without saying that the perception of school sports is influenced by the social environment and vice versa.

How can this situation be changed? In which way can the Olympic family intervene in a case which seems to be the sole responsibility of governments? And how can this intervention be effective? In fact there is much that can be done in this direction.

The International Olympic Committee can play a dynamic role in this area. The International Olympic Committee (IOC) in recent years has been absolutely absorbed by the settlement of issues relating solely to sporting events. It also gives the impression that the word "Olympic" refers only to Olympic athletes. The IOC seems to underestimate the contribution of public sport by continuing and replenishing Olympic sport. It must undertake special initiatives to organise and enhance sport for young people.

It can do this in the following ways:

1. The establishment of a special committee of scientists to initiate and achieve the above goal.
2. The organisation of an international conference to which all representatives of Governments worldwide, in particular the Ministers of Education, will be invited.
3. The development of a formal proposal taking into account the views and ideas of the Ministries of Education and Sports at all levels, that includes the philosophical aim of the development and enhancement of "secular" sport.
4. In parallel, the IOC can undertake a series of "smart" activities in order to "wake up" the interest of young people in sport, thereby enhancing "Olympism" and "Olympic education".
5. Finally, Olympic champions who have received the premium support of the IOC and the Olympic family, should be invited in some way to "pay back" their communities by supporting "Olympism". Without this, Olympic sport is doomed to decline.