

Lyras, A. (2012). Olympism in Practice: Psychosocial Impacts of an Educational Sport Initiative on Greek and Turkish Cypriot Youth. *ICHPER-SD Journal of Research*, 7(1), 46-54.

What is it about? (Aim/objectives)

The effects of a 4-month Olympism (Education) programme's camp on the social and psychological changes of Greek and Turkish Cypriot children in terms of conflict resolution and peaceful co-existence.

Where is it from? (Context/location)

The Olympic Movement Summer Camp held in Argos, a small village in the Pitsilia Mountains of Cyprus.

Who are involved? (Research participants)

This was a high profile camp funded by the IOC (Solidarity Funding), several United Nations agencies and the Cyprus Research Foundation and part of the Doves Olympic Movement Project.

What are the readings and main concepts?

The Doves Olympic Movement Project - Olympic Movement Summer Camp.

- i) Pre-camp activities and experiences – recruitment and training of 20 instructors and meetings with parents and 96 youth (orientation).
- ii) Six-day long camp experience – sport/physical activity component, cultural enrichment programme, educational component (instructors and educational methodology), and organizational components (setting, location, groupings and facilities).
 - Training of 20 instructors from two diverse communities in conflict – Turkish and Greek ethnicity in Cyprus.
 - Learning the fundamentals of their favourite sports, an introduction on human rights, environmental concepts and learned how to use the internet.
 - Youth engaged in daily conflict management activities.
 - Youth experienced a variety of sports, evening entertainment activities and daily new themes were introduced, such as Human Rights Day, Environment Day, Olympic Movement Day, etc
 - The youth were housed in groups of three to four per room as per parents' and their (own) requests, but Turkish and Greek youth could make room changes after the orientation by making a special verbal request.
 - Youths received a handbook with questions to help in completing their projects. They kept a journal where they reflect on the daily activities, related to the topics of the day.

What are the main findings? (Results)

The instructors agreed that the success of the camp lies in youth having positive interactions with each other away from negative media reports and politicians who would capitalise on inter-ethnic conflict for political gain.

The majority of youth benefits from the camp and findings relate to the organizational characteristics of the Doves Project that were perceived as very effective in bringing positive changes:

- Making new friends and collaborating with youth from the other ethnic group;
- Positive attitudes and acceptance of 'others' developed;
- Youth developed an increased sense of community;
- The setting (isolation) from everyday life fostered positive attitude change – social (positive inter-relationships) and an inclusive identity, inter-ethnic tolerance and for gender-inclusion;
- Physical activities and sports had to be adapted to have positive outcomes; and
- Instructors became positive role models.

What are the main lessons? (Discussion/Reflections/Learnings)

The design and activities of a camp away from communities in conflict may reap many benefits (see findings).

Is it useful? (Chat room, knowledge sharing)

What inter-ethnic or other inter-group conflicts exist in the communities you are working in? Discuss the root causes of such conflict and see how this may have an effect on your work in the community.

How can your programme learn from this research in offering activities that may bridge such divides and assist youth in reducing the social distance between them and those different from them?