

THE EDUCATIONAL EXPERIENCE OF ATHLETES IN YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

*A EXPERIÊNCIA EDUCACIONAL DOS ATLETAS NOS JOGOS
OLÍMPICOS DA JUVENTUDE: UMA REVISÃO SISTEMÁTICA* 

*LA EXPERIENCIA EDUCATIVA DE LOS ATLETAS EN LOS JUEGOS
OLÍMPICOS DE LA JUVENTUD: UNA REVISIÓN SISTEMÁTICA* 

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 **Adriano Lopes de Souza*** <adrianolopes_10@hotmail.com>

 **Otávio Tavares**** <tavaresotavio@yahoo.com.br>

*Federal University of Tocantins. Tocantinópolis, TO, Brazil.

**Federal University of Espírito Santo. Vitória, ES, Brazil.

Abstract: This study aims at understanding what has been produced in national and international literature about participation of young elite athletes in the Youth Olympic Games, focusing on their educational experience. We conducted a qualitative systematic review including searches in five different databases using inclusion and exclusion criteria to select seven articles. The results showed that participation in the YOG can promote a set of value-based learnings for young athletes. However, such educational experiences seem to materialize much more from informal meetings and sociocultural interactions between them. It finds that the success of this new mega event does not lie in replicating the Olympic Games in preparation for the youth to perform in adult editions, but in their ability/potential to balance the sport-competition-education triad more clearly.

Keywords: Youth Sports. Social learning. Systematic review. Adolescent.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Mega events are a significant part of our contemporary experience and, therefore, they must always be subject to debate and even to public scrutiny (TAVARES, 2011). Among mega sporting events, more specifically, we are interested in highlighting the Olympic Games (OG), not only for bringing together the best athletes in an international competition but also for being explicitly linked to an Olympic ideology, whose references are circumscribed by a set of guiding values (TAVARES, 2003), thus transcending a scenario strictly related to athletes' performances in fields, arenas and other competition spaces.

Indeed, it was precisely to explain such value-based ideals that, in 2007, the International Olympic Committee (IOC)¹ created an innovative mega event: the Youth Olympic Games (YOG), whose target audience is young elite athletes² aged 15-18. Principle No. 6 of the Olympic Charter, for example, assumed that sport can be an important instrument to educate youth, aiming at building a more just, harmonious and supportive world (COI, 1997).

Thus, aiming at achieving educational goals, the Education and Culture Program (CEP) was implemented in this new Olympic competition. Over the course of 12 days, it developed numerous activities to inspire young athletes to experience cultural exchange and live according to Olympic values, in an ambivalence between sports performance and humanistic development (TURINI et al. 2008; DaCOSTA, 2009; TAVARES, 2009; PARRY, 2012). Therefore, the YOG should not be considered simply as a 'mini-Olympics' but also as the most prominent mega event with sporting, cultural and educational character for youth.

Thus, in view of the aforementioned educational, cultural and evaluative characteristic of this mega sporting event, we are faced with the following guiding question: What has been produced in national and international literature regarding the experience of young elite athletes in the YOG? That said, the present study aims to understand what has been produced in scientific literature regarding young elite athletes' participation in that mega event, with focus on their educational experience. With this, we intend to give visibility to the contributions of these studies regarding the learning experiences of YOG protagonists: young athletes.

2 METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The present study adopted the assumptions of a systematic literature review, with a descriptive qualitative design. This method is based on a synthesis of studies

1 International non-governmental and non-profit organization headquartered in Lausanne (Switzerland) since 1915. It is the highest authority of the MO – both having its founder Baron de Coubertin – whose mission is to promote Olympism worldwide and to direct this Movement in accordance with the responsibilities that the Olympic Charter confers on it, as well as to ensure the organization and regular celebration of all OG modalities (IOC, 1997).

When referring to young elite athletes, we are referring to those subjects that are part of high-performance sports, training in clubs or similar, aiming to participate in competitions at federated level. Therefore, it differs from young people who participate in sports in leisure or school spaces.

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related to a guiding question, considering the similarities and differences between them, thus enabling us not only to know the landscape of publications on a given theme in the light of the literature available, but also to identify possible gaps and perspectives for future research, with new interpretive possibilities and new theoretical directions on the object studied (SAVIN-BADEN; MAJOR, 2010; GOMES; CAMINHA, 2014).

For that, we consulted the following online databases: SciELO, Scopus, SPORTDiscus, CAPES Journals Portal, and Web of Science. The descriptors used in the survey of the articles pertinent to this review were: 'education' and 'educational experience' combined with each other through the Boolean operator 'OR' and also combined with 'Youth Olympic Games,' through the Boolean operator 'AND,' in three languages: Portuguese, English and Spanish. We also adopted a nine-year time frame covering the 2010-2019 period so as to include the first edition of the YOG onwards.

The following inclusion criteria were established: (a) addressing the educational character of the YOG; (b) having young Olympic athletes as subjects; (c) being published in 2010-2019; (d) being an empirical study published in a scientific journal in English, Portuguese or Spanish, with full text available. On the other hand, the exclusion criteria implemented were: (a) lack of direct relationship with the theme; (b) being carried out with other subjects without the involvement of the aforementioned athletes; (c) unpublished articles, review articles, opinion articles and critical reviews as well as original articles that were not fully available in English, Portuguese or Spanish.

Furthermore, with regard to the procedures to search for articles, we initially proceeded by carefully reading titles, abstracts and respective key words in order to ascertain whether such studies were consistent or not with the aforementioned criteria (inclusion and exclusion). Therefore, in line with the guidance of the Center for Reviews and Dissemination (2008), we conducted a careful analysis of the quality of the selected literature by reading the full texts that met the respective criteria.

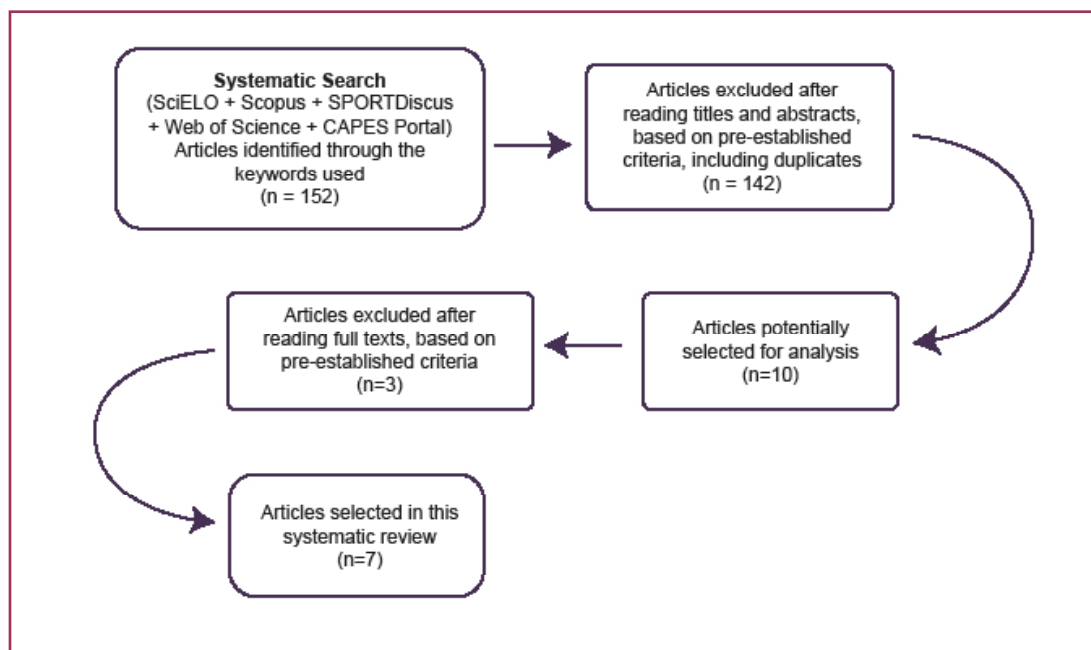
Given the above, we chose to focus on the following items contained in the articles selected for this review: goal, methodological approach (method and techniques), location (locus), participating subjects (sample), and main results. Regarding the treatment of the latter, we used content analysis procedures (BARDIN, 2011), whose categories were established afterwards.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As summarized on the flowchart below (Figure 1), the initial search in the indexing bases resulted in 152 articles (SciELO = 2; Scopus = 21; SPORTDiscus = 40; CAPES Journals Portal = 48; Web of Science = 41). Of those, 142 were excluded after reading titles and abstracts, either for lack of a direct relationship with the topic of interest – focus on aspects such as tourism, political economy, entrepreneurship, sustainability, nutrition and obesity – or for not including young athletes as subjects of the study (based, for example, on the perspective of spectators, coaches and volunteers) or simply because they were not available in full and due to elimination of

duplicates. That said, a set of ten articles was selected for full reading, of which three articles were excluded because they departure from the educational discussion linked to the YOG. Thus, a total of seven publications met all the pre-established criteria and made up the final sample of this systematic review. (See Figure 1).

Figure 1 – Flowchart of the selection and screening of studies included in the review.



Source: The authors.

Preliminarily, almost all publications in the English language caught our attention, based on the filter established in our search on the referred databases, representing 98.7 percent of our initial sample. That is, of the 152 articles initially identified, only two were written in Spanish and none in Portuguese. This situation may be associated with the fact that – summer and winter – YOG editions were held on the Asian and European continents, except for the most recent edition, which occurred for the first time in South America, in the city of Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2018. The main items contained in the seven articles that made up the final sample of this review will be detailed below.

3.1 ON GOALS

As shown in Table 1, the articles analyzed sought to give voice to the true protagonists of this mega event (young Olympic athletes) in order to analyze, understand, explore, evaluate and, therefore, give visibility to what they experienced in the editions in which they had the opportunity to compete and participate, with special interest in the educational component idealized by the IOC for these Games, which materializes more directly in the activities undertaken by the CEP.

We understand that such goals are very pertinent, since the world lived or experienced by the action of young athletes may contain singularities that are sometimes at odds with what has been previously – and externally – projected. Thus, in the same way that pedestrians may reinvent a different route in the midst of the

projected urban order (CERTEAU, 1994), young Olympic athletes are able to produce meanings that bring them closer to or farther from what the IOC designed for them.

Therefore, focusing on the experiences of these athletes from the dialectical interaction that they establish with each other and with that context may help to elucidate their perception of their participation in the YOG and, more specifically, in related educational activities.

Table 1 – Goals of the studies analyzed.

REFERENCE	GOALS
Krieger (2013)	To analyze the experiences of athletes participating in the YOG and contrast their perception of the event to IOC policies.
Kristiansen (2013)	To examine how Norwegian athletes experienced the first winter YOG, balancing the regular competition program with the CEP and what athletes perceive as stressors and how they deal with it.
Parent; Kristiansen; Macintosh (2014)	To understand the experiences of young athletes at a youth sports festival, specifically the YOG, highlighting perceptions and stressors related to such experiences.
Schnitzer; Peters; Pocecco (2014)	To provide comprehensive feedback on the first winter YOG by the most important stakeholders in this event: the athletes, highlighting their perception of the CEP.
Peters; Schnitzer (2015)	To evaluate the perception of the YOG experience from the point of view of young elite athletes and other interest groups, highlighting expectations, experiences and legacies.
Krieger; Kristiansen (2016)	To explore the conscience of young Germans and Norwegians participating in YOG about the additional educational mission of this new event.
Macintosh; Parent; Culver (2019)	To understand young athletes' perspectives on the YOG environment, highlighting their experiences, perceptions and learning.

Source: The authors.

3.2 METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

None of the studies included in this systematic review specified the method used in the body text, although one of them mentioned 'case study' in its title. Thus, only methodological approach, data collection techniques and procedures used were specified.

The most recurrent methodological approach in these studies was the qualitative approach present in five of them, whose main data collection techniques were semi-structured interviews (KRIEGER, 2013; KRISTIANSEN, 2013; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016), focus group (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015), and semi-structured interview, complemented by on-site observations (MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019). The other two studies adopted mixed approaches, using qualitative and quantitative questionnaires as their main techniques, complemented by observations (PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014), as well as application of questionnaires with the composition of focal groups, together (SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014).

3.3 ON LOCATION

To date, there have been three editions of the summer YOG – in Singapore (2010), Nanjing, China (2014) and Buenos Aires, Argentina – combined with two editions of the winter YOG in Innsbruck, Austria (2012) and Lillehammer, Norway (2016).

Thus, since these are empirical studies – focused on the experiences of young athletes –, data collection for the articles analyzed was restricted to those locations. Most of our sample (71.4%) chose to investigate the first winter YOG in the city of Innsbruck (KRISTIANSEN, 2013; PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014; SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014; PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015), including a study that gathered data collected in that location with the data collected earlier in the city of Singapore (KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016). Thus, the other two studies were based on the first edition of the YOG in Singapore (KRIEGER, 2013) and the second edition of the winter YOG in Lillehammer (MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019).

Regarding authors' work locations, in turn, the European continent prevailed, given that five out of seven articles analyzed were signed exclusively by researchers from Germany, Austria and/or Norway. In addition, in one of the two remaining articles, there was a mix of authors from Canada with a Norwegian author, while the last study had Canadian authors.

3.4 ON PARTICIPATING SUBJECTS

In line with one of our inclusion criteria, subjects participating in the studies analyzed inevitably included young athletes. However, one of the studies also included in its sample other subjects who were directly or indirectly part of their context of performance in the YOG environment, namely: coaches, ambassadors, mission chefs, and even model athletes³.

The number of subjects in the articles analyzed varied according to the approach taken by the respective authors. In the two studies that worked with mixed approaches, for example, the number of subjects investigated varied between 89 and 662; in studies with qualitative approaches, in turn, the number of subjects investigated varied between eight and 36.

With regard to the procedure to select these subjects, it is clear that only two studies performed purposeful sampling procedure or intentional sampling (KRISTIANSEN, 2013; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016). The other studies did not specify their procedures, but, as the two previous ones, they sought to compose their samples with participants that included diverse characteristics, namely: includes both sexes (n = 7); compete in differentiated sports; are part of different nations and/or continents (n = 5); and even achieve different levels of success in sports competitions, including medalists and non-medalists (n = 1), as can be seen in Table 2.

In this regard, accessing the referred research subjects – mostly high-performance athletes – was difficult. Now, as argued in one of the studies, the IOC

³ These athletes were invited by the IOC to act in the YOG as some kind of mentors for the young participating athletes, sharing with them their life experiences and their sporting trajectories, as well as accompanying them in a series of educational activities in the Olympic Youth Village.

seeks to restrict access to its athletes as much as possible during its events (PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014), limiting the possibilities of conducting research with that target audience. Therefore, with the exception of possible cases in which the studies have previously been supported/sponsored by the IOC, many researchers need to make efforts to be able to operationalize their research with such audience. In one of the studies, for example, the authors had to work out an agreement with the referred Committee, making sure they sent a post-Games report about athletes' experiences and perceptions in exchange for access to them during the Games (MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019). Thus, this obstacle may help to justify the low number of studies we found in different databases. (See Table 2)

Still regarding this item, a second important aspect is also worth noting. Despite the attempt by these studies to diversify their samples, strictly speaking, their focus was on young athletes from North America and Europe, especially Canadians, Germans and Norwegians – the researchers' main nationalities. Even the surveys that reported covering nations from different continents limited their interviews to English, French, German and Russian. In this way, it can be said that South American athletes, for example, were underrepresented in these surveys in comparison with North Americans and Europeans. Therefore, that is a notorious gap in the production of knowledge.

Table 2 – Subjects participating in the analyzed studies.

REFERENCE	PARTICIPATING SUBJECTS
Krieger (2013)	Eight German competitive athletes aged 16-18 who participated in the YOG-2010. They included five males and three were females who competed in five different sports.
Kristiansen (2013)	Nine young athletes from the Norwegian team (three men and six women between the ages of 17 and 18); four athletes were interviewed in Innsbruck after finishing their competitive events early while the other five were interviewed within a few weeks after returning to Norway.
Parent; Kristiansen; Macintosh (2014)	27 athletes from the Norwegian team (13 women and 14 men) and 28 athletes from the Canadian team (seven women and 21 men).
Schnitzer; Peters; Pocecco (2014)	662 young athletes - 346 males (52.3%) and 316 females (47.7%), most of whom were part of the European continent (60%), followed by Asia (19.5%), North America (10.5%) and other continents (6%); of those, 43 athletes from 17 different nations made up the focus groups competing in eight different sports. Interviews were conducted in English, French, German and Russian.
Peters; Schnitzer (2015)	89 participants, including 43 young athletes from 17 different nations competing in eight different sports; the other subjects were coaches, ambassadors, mission chefs or model athletes. Interviews were conducted in English, French, German and Russian.
Krieger; Kristiansen (2016)	22 young athletes including eight Germans aged 16-18 who participated in the YOG-2010 (five males and three females), who competed in six different sports (swimming, jumping, pole vaulting, sailing, fencing, 400-m race) and with different levels of success in YOG competitions (medalists and non-medalists); and ten Norwegian and four German athletes who participated in YOG-2012 and competed in 11 different sports.
Macintosh; Parent; Culver (2019)	36 young athletes (15 females and 21 males), representing 24 NOCs, all continents, and 14 sports disciplines. The interviews were conducted in English and French.

Source: The authors.

3.4 ON THE MAIN RESULTS

After an exploratory reading of the seven articles included in this review, in order to identify and organize the central characteristics and the key elements contained in its main results, two categories of analysis were constructed, namely: 1- Educational goals: Possibilities and contingencies; 2- Educational goals: Challenges and resistance. Next, the elements that come closer and the elements that compete with the educational goals – as idealized by the IOC – will be presented and discussed based on the perspective of young Olympic athletes regarding their participation in one of the YOG editions.

3.4.1 Educational goals: Possibilities and contingencies

The first aspect to be highlighted as an educational possibility in the YOG refers to the first great moment aimed at gathering and introducing all athletes, together with promoting Olympic symbols: the opening ceremony. They point it out as a strong, remarkable or exciting experience (KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016) as well as a great platform for intercultural learning – for example, fostering athletes' geographical knowledge (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015).

The second aspect that deserves to be highlighted concerns the IOC's requirement that young athletes remain in the Youth Olympic Village (YOY) throughout the event – different, for example, from traditional OG in which athletes immediately return to their countries after completing their sporting commitments. Thus, young athletes have greater opportunities to meet and make friends with athletes from different cultures at the YOY as well as to participate in different educational activities offered by the CEP (KRIEGER, 2013).

As pointed out by Schnitzer, Peters and Pocecco (2014), the questionnaires answered by the young athletes revealed that, by participating in CEP activities, they were able to gather a set of learnings about the following aspects: Olympic values (86.1%); other cultures (83.2%); managing their future careers as elite athletes (80%); expressing their own opinions (74.6%); sense of social responsibility (69.3%); preventing sports injuries and improving lifestyle (62.9%). Peters and Schnitzer (2015) add that those athletes who were able to participate in CEP activities liked to share their experiences with others, recognizing the great effort made by organizers to provide additional benefits and contribute to their formative process, which goes beyond sporting commitment.

Thus, athletes of different nationalities saw the CEP as a program capable of promoting greater social interaction between them and, consequently, as a possibility of making new friends and thus relating it to the value of Friendship (MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019) in addition to preparing them for future challenges such as ways of dealing with the media and even granting interviews to radio or TV channels and improving their communication skills (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015). Therefore, it appears that participation in the YOG in general and in CEP activities in particular can provide learning that transcends issues related to young athletes' physical and sports performances and also includes reflection on their psychological, emotional and social aspects.

The aspects most appreciated by athletes from different countries about their experience at the YOY include visits by model athletes who spoke not only about their achievements and challenges in sports but also continually emphasized the importance of education throughout a high-performance career, exploring aspects such as doping, safety, ways of acting, etc. (KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016). Thus, encounters with such model athletes were considered important for their personal development and to mitigate the competitive aspect, since the focus was not only on their sports performance (KRISTIANSEN, 2013; PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015). In addition, the presence of model athletes – or stars, as young athletes called them – also served as an important incentive for young athletes to participate in their respective CEP activities (SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014).

Another significant aspect appreciated was the 'YOGGER,' a USB device provided by the YOG organizing committee that greatly facilitated information exchange between athletes, that is, as a kind of 'icebreaker,' as pointed out by some of them (PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014). Thus, the YOGGER was perceived by athletes as a useful idea for establishing first contacts with other athletes, aiming at maintaining post-game contact through social media (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016; MACINTOSH; PARENT ; CULVER, 2019).

On the other hand, when asked, for example, about what young athletes had enjoyed in YOG in general, about 72 percent of the sample pointed out participation in CEP activities, compared to those who preferred sports disputes (96.6%), coexistence at the YOY (93.3%), or walks in the city of Innsbruck (93.2%), or even the opportunity to meet Olympic athletes from other cultures (87.2%), denoting, therefore, that CEP educational activities were comparatively less appreciated by those subjects (SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014).

In fact, many athletes stated that they were delighted after experiencing the international and intercultural atmosphere present in this mega event, from its opening ceremony through its sports competitions and, especially, in living with athletes from different places, sharing a set of experiences, tastes and aspirations on YOY premises (PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014; MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019). Even meal time at the dining room was pointed out as a rich and important cultural experience (KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016). Such aspects served to strengthen ties not only between athletes from different cultures, but also within national teams themselves (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015).

However, it is interesting to note that many athletes associated this memorable, educational and cultural experience with the simple fact of being there at the YOY and not necessarily with participating in the activities planned and organized by the CEP (KRIEGER, 2013; PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014; KRIEGER ; KRISTIANSEN, 2016). Therefore, although they are close to the formative and educational goals – in particular, regarding internationalism, cultural exchange and building friendships – such results seem to have been contingent to some extent, materializing from informal interactions between these subjects.

3.4.2 Educational goals: Challenges and resistance

Despite the possibility/obligation of their stay at the YOY throughout the event, many athletes still had few experiences at the CEP or simply did not participate in its educational activities. They provided a range of reasons. Some pointed out lack of opportunities due to an extensive competition schedule; others, lack of interest, when considering such activities as suitable for 'children' and not for their ages; others prioritized seeing their teammates compete; others said they chose to use their free time to rest and recover between their own competitions (KRIEGER, 2013; PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014; SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016).

The focus on sports competition can also be highlighted as a factor that competed with the educational possibilities arising from CEP activities. After all, the same athletes who enjoyed the interactive and friendly atmosphere of the YOY and considered CEP initiatives as a good way to get to know new cultures and make friends, for example, also pointed out that they were there firstly to compete and try to win as many medals as possible (SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014). After all, as argued by some of them, that competition is disputed only once in a lifetime (KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016). In fact, while innovative competitive events were considered pleasant – for example, with mixed-sex and mixed-continent teams – ended up generating a certain strangeness on athletes. For them, regular competitions enjoy greater prestige and therefore are more attractive in the search for the Olympic medal (KRISTIANSEN, 2013; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016).

In fact, because they are elite athletes in their categories, the sporting dimension – through their athletic performance in competitions – was the most dominant aspect for young elite athletes in the YOG, relating to the value of excellence (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016; MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019). Such excellence for young athletes was expressed as the effort to be the best in their sports, in a continuous search for victory, but anchored on a notion of fair play – related to the value of respect – as they experienced with CEP initiatives (MACINTOSH; PARENT; CULVER, 2019). Therefore, participating in these interactive activities was also pointed out as an aspect that contributed to the basis of their experiences, consisting, in this case, of one of the possible and important legacies of that mega event (PETERS; SCHNITZER, 2015).

Now, regarding the discussion about the legacies resulting from mega sporting events, Reppold Filho (2013) says that these can be seen under different characterizations: positive or negative, intentional or unintentional, tangible or intangible, etc. Among them, Romera (2014) warns us of the need to look more intently at intangible aspects – as identified above –, the consequences of which directly affect different social dimensions, such as public health, drug use prevention, and reduction of violence in stadiums.

Finally, based on the perspective of the athletes themselves, it is imperative to underscore that some measures could be taken by the organizing committee in an attempt to minimize their low participation in the aforementioned educational

activities promoted by the CEP. They are: providing distinct activities to athletes of different ages, since young people aged 15-18 have different tastes and preferences; including themes closer to their realities, e.g. reconciling school, family life and sports; investing in visiting more model athletes at the YOV to share their stories (PARENT; KRISTIANSEN; MACINTOSH, 2014; KRIEGER; KRISTIANSEN, 2016).

Other measures were also mentioned, namely: organizing athletes' competition schedules in a more balanced way; instructing young ambassadors, representatives of each National Olympic Committee and coaches of the several delegations to communicate more effectively with young athletes about the existence and, above all, the real purpose of the educational program, thus encouraging them to participate in their respective activities (SCHNITZER; PETERS; POCECCO, 2014) since some athletes did not have prior information about them and consider them as mere entertainment or cultural distraction (KRISTIANSEN, 2013).

4 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The results showed that there is not yet a fair measure between the IOC's official discourse and young Olympic athletes' expectations, experiences, perceptions and preferences, especially with regard to the fruition of CEP initiatives to implement the educational goals linked to the YOG.

On the one hand, the results indicate that some CEP initiatives were appreciated by the young athletes who proposed to participate in its activities, being, in this case, one of the possible and important intangible legacies of this mega sporting event. On the other hand, it appears that many learnings of athletes in the YOG – in particular, regarding internationalism, cultural exchange and building friendships – seem to have been contingent to some extent, materializing much more from meetings and informal interactions. In addition, it is observed that such systematic activities of the CEP do not seem to enjoy great popularity with most of the athletes investigated, who, for different and multiple reasons, resist or have difficulties to participate.

Thus, such an educational intent requires reflection, perhaps reassessment of the entire educational and cultural programming by the YOG organizing committee in order to provide better conditions for young athletes to fully experience the Olympic spirit and the educational possibilities related to a mega sporting event that aims to transcend the competitive dimension.

Finally, the data presented in this review suggest that the search for balance between sports competition and cultural and educational goals is a necessary challenge for the establishment of a mega sporting event, especially for the younger audience, as is the case with YOG. Therefore, its success does not lie in the attempt to reproduce the traditional OG for youth as some kind of 'mini-Olympics' designed to prepare them to act in adult editions, but rather in its capacity or potential to more clearly balance the sport-competition-education triad.

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Resumo: O objetivo do presente estudo é compreender o que vem sendo produzido na literatura nacional e internacional a respeito da participação dos jovens atletas de elite no Jogos Olímpicos da Juventude, com foco na sua experiência educacional. Para tanto, realizamos uma revisão sistemática qualitativa. As buscas foram realizadas em cinco bases de dados diferenciadas, a partir das quais selecionamos sete artigos em consonância com os critérios de inclusão e exclusão. Os resultados apontaram que a participação nos YOG pode promover um conjunto de aprendizagens valorativas aos jovens atletas. Entretanto, tais experiências educacionais parecem materializar-se muito mais a partir de reuniões e interações socioculturais de caráter informal entre eles. Conclui-se que o sucesso deste novo megaevento não reside em replicar os Jogos Olímpicos como preparação da juventude para atuar nas edições adultas, mas na sua capacidade/potencialidade para equilibrar mais claramente a tríade esporte-competição-educação.

Palavras chave: Esportes juvenis. Aprendizagem social. Revisão sistemática. Adolescente.

Resumen: El objetivo de este estudio es comprender lo que se ha producido en la literatura nacional e internacional sobre la participación de los jóvenes atletas de élite en los Juegos Olímpicos de la Juventud, centrándose en su experiencia educativa. Con este fin, realizamos una revisión sistemática cualitativa. Las búsquedas se realizaron en cinco bases de datos diferentes, de las cuales seleccionamos siete artículos de acuerdo con los criterios de inclusión y exclusión. Los resultados mostraron que la participación en los YOG puede promover un conjunto de aprendizajes de valor para los jóvenes atletas. Sin embargo, tales experiencias educativas parecen materializarse mucho más a partir de reuniones e interacciones socioculturales de carácter informal entre ellos. Se concluye que el éxito de este nuevo megaevento no radica en replicar los Juegos Olímpicos como preparación para que los jóvenes se presenten en las ediciones para adultos, sino en su capacidad/potencial para equilibrar más claramente la tríada de deporte-competición-educación.

Palabras clave: Deportes juveniles. Aprendizaje social. Revisión sistemática. Adolescente.