

HIGHEST, FASTEST, YOUNGEST? A HERMENEUTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE YOUTH OLYMPIC GAMES

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Abstract

The Youth Olympic Games (YOG) are the newest addition to the Olympic Movement and in light of recent discussions of the education of high-performance athletes (see Conzelmann & Nagel, 2003; Giulianotti, 2004; David, 2005; Lally, 2007) represent a change within the International Olympic Committee (IOC) from a philosophy of “winning by all means” to a philosophy much more informed by education. Therefore this paper will analyse the YOG through the experiences of participating athletes and put their perception of the event in contrast to the policies of the IOC. The methodological framework is based on a Foucauldian approach which constitutes different discourses on the YOG and is closely linked to Hermeneutics which is used in order to analyse the construction and production of meanings around the event by the IOC and the participants. Through the centering of the agents within the hermeneutic analysis along with the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) a more relevant image of the YOG is constructed and it results that the perceptions of the athletes are in contrast to the policy documents. Whereas the organisation claims that the content of the Culture and Education Programme (CEP) at Singapore was very successful and enhanced the educational experience of the athletes, the subjects of this study were in a way dissatisfied with the programme. Thus, their perceptions helped to deconstruct the political claims in a very valuable way and future, athlete-centred research is needed in order to enhance the educational and cultural effects of the YOG.

Declaration of Originality

I, the undersigned, declare that this dissertation is my own, original work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other educational institute. Information, ideas, thoughts and opinions from both the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged within the text with a list of references clearly stated in the Bibliography of this dissertation.

JÖRG KRIEGER

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Abbreviations

ARM	-	Athlete Role Model
BOA	-	British Olympic Academy
CDA	-	Critical Discourse Analysis
CEP	-	Culture and Education Programme
IOC	-	International Olympic Committee
IYOGOC	-	2012 Innsbruck Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee
NOC	-	National Olympic Committee
NTU	-	Nanyang Technological University
RZ	-	Residential Zone in the Youth Olympic Village
SYOGOC	-	2010 Singapore Youth Olympic Games Organising Committee
UK	-	United Kingdom
USA	-	United States of America
USSR	-	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
VS	-	Village Square in the Youth Olympic Village
YOG	-	Youth Olympic Games
YOV	-	Youth Olympic Village

1. Introduction

“Olympism refuses to make physical education a purely physiological thing, and to make each type of sport an independent, separate exercise. It refuses to catalogue the knowledge of the mind, and to classify it into mutually isolated categories. (...) Olympism is a destroyer of dividing walls. It calls for air and light for all. It advocates a broad-based athletic education accessible to all, trimmed with manly courage and the spirit of chivalry, blended with esthetic and literary demonstrations, and serving as an engine for national life and as a basis for civic life. That is its ideal program. Now can it be achieved?”

(Coubertin, 1918/2001: p.547f.)

During my studies on Pierre de Coubertin over the last few years, I often came across this quote from the founder of the Modern Olympic Games which emphasizes the importance of an education of the body and the mind through the Olympic Games. However - quite rightly - Coubertin asks the question at the end of this particular quote, whether this ideal and almost utopic vision is realistic and achievable; as if he had known that in the decades to come Olympic sport would turn its back on education and develop into a high-performance system controlled by the capitalist market (Damkjær, 2004: p.218). For Coubertin there was never any doubt that the Olympic Games were the perfect tool in order to combine education and exercise. He strongly believed that his sporting event would help to achieve a better transnational understanding by educating the youth of the world to think and act in less nationalistic ways¹. In fact, Quantz (1993) argues that Coubertin's plan to revive the Olympic Games was partly motivated by the

¹ Despite Coubertin promoting internationalism, some researchers argue that Coubertin also believed that sporting education would help to revive the nationalistic spirit in France (see Allison, 2012).

educational plan to encourage the exchange between young men from different nations in order to develop mutual respect for each other, an idea which Quantz links to the central educational idea of the International Peace Movement². Therefore it is plausible to argue that Coubertin's primary motive for establishing the Olympic Games was to initiate an "educationally orientated project" (Beamish & Ritchie, 2006: p.12).

However, the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the institution which organises the Olympic Games and maintains Coubertin's spiritual heritage, renounced from the educational aims of its founder when "economic interests connected this organization with commercial corporations" (Eichberg, 2004: p.72). Despite its continuous "deference to youth and internationalism" (Tomlinson, 2005: p.61), the IOC promoted high-performance sport rather than educational values and the cultural exchange between the youth of the world. With the re-entrance of the USSR³, the Olympic Games' lent itself to a pursuit of records and the display of political power through sport. As a result of drug abuse, boycotts and over-trained athletes, the Olympic Movement discarded its educational goals and turned into a system in which only the best performances were accepted without consideration for the personal development of the athlete for whom the Olympic Games were staged in the first place. With regard to this it is particularly

² It is often ignored that during the 1890s when the IOC was founded, other committees were brought together as well. This is in particular true for organisations within the International Peace Movement such as the Red Cross Movement and the International Peace Bureau. Future Noble Peace Prize winners such as Henri Dunant and Henri La Fontaine were on the patronage list of the Sorbonne Congress in 1894 when the IOC was founded (Wassong, 2001). This exemplifies the importance of internationalism within Coubertin's visions.

³ The Soviet Union was accepted by the IOC at IOC session in Vienna in May 1951 after the USSR had created a national Olympic Committee a few weeks earlier (Guttman, 2002). They first competed at the 1952 Helsinki Olympic Games, winning a total of 440 Gold medals from 1952 to 1992 (Tomlinson, 2011: p.11).

significant that many athletes were often supported in their athletic achievements but did not get any help considering their education or career transition after retirement.

However in the past ten years, more and more studies have looked at the education of professional athletes and stated that an athlete's dedication to a professional career can be dangerous to him/her if the emphasis is only on the pursuit of athletic achievements (Giulianotti, 2004). In a similar way, David (2005) writes that the right of athletes to be educated should not be neglected. Thus, a lack of understanding of the importance of education could lead to difficulties in the transition from an athlete into a working professional. In light of this, the IOC has - for the first time in its history - addressed athlete's education on their latest Olympic Congress in Copenhagen in December 2009. In the speeches and addresses, the IOC officials, academics and in particular former athlete and member of the IOC's athlete commission Frankie Fredericks continuously referred to youth events such as the newly introduced Youth Olympic Games (YOG) to "deliver programmes and messages" (International Olympic Committee, 2009b: p.101) which should endorse the importance of combining education and sport. Therefore one can assume that a change within the IOC from a philosophy of "winning by all means" to a philosophy much more informed by education is taking place and the YOG seem to play a leading role within this transformation. There seems to be a change within the IOC policy which is much more informed by education and youth rather than high-performance sport although critics argue that this change is enforced by the IOC's quest to conquer the youth market rather than the acknowledgement of the importance of education (Bush et al., 2004;

Lenskyj, 2008; Thorpe & Wheaton, 2012). This has caused me to pose the questions why has the IOC implemented the Youth Olympic Games, and why is there a turn within the IOC towards education?

However, as the athletes play the most important role within this process because they are directly affected by the policy change, this study focuses on the opinion of the athletes and their perception of the educational emphasis of the YOG. It is assumed that by encouraging the young athletes to share their experiences and involvement in the YOG, one is in a better position to acknowledge and address how the new addition to the Olympic Movement can work most effectively. In the past the voices of young athletes have been largely ignored within youth research and policy development related to sporting activities. However, “there is a growing shift towards acceptance of, and support for, viewing young people as competent and skilled social agents who are capable of reflecting upon, understanding and articulating their experiences” (Sandford et al., 2010: p.66) and this shift is the basis for this research project. Consequently, the framework of the research project is based on a Foucauldian approach which constitutes different discourses on the YOG and is closely linked to the process of hermeneutics which is used in order to analyse the construction and production of meanings around the event by the IOC and the participants. It is argued that the centering of the agents within the hermeneutic process along with the use of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) enables me to construct a more relevant image of the YOG and the approach can be situated within ongoing discussions on the centering of subjects within qualitative research. For example, Andrews (2007) argues that through language/discourse an individual is able to “to construct self-

understanding” (p.38). Consequently, IOC policy documents were compared with the perceptions of the athletes, and a CDA was conducted with emphasis on the examination of IOC policy documents and qualitative, semi-structured interviews with German participants of the YOG.

Therefore this research aims to close the gap within research on the YOG by analysing the staging of the 2010 Singapore Youth Olympic Games. The main research question which guided the study throughout the whole research process is: Was there an emphasis on education during the first YOG and was such an emphasis perceived by the participating athletes? Any discrepancy between the claims of the IOC surrounding the event and the experience of the athlete would be demonstrated in answering this question. Chapter 2 outlines the academic research around the Olympic Movement and wider theoretical perspectives surrounding the analysis of the Olympic Games. It brings together the most important literature from the Critical Sociology, Olympic researchers and the newest academic research on the education of the athlete. These theoretical concepts build the basis for my analysis of the athlete’s perceptions and the IOC policy behind the YOG from which the main research questions evolve. Chapter 3 outlines the theoretical approaches taken to the research methodology, and the methods utilized in data collection and analysis. In Chapter 4 the main facts and figures as well as the programme of the YOG are outlined. Chapter 5, then, presents the most significant findings from the interviews with the athletes and the policy documents, gathers together the main conclusions drawn from the data and discusses them with regard to their relevant meanings and implications for further research.

The aim of this introduction has been to establish the significance of the research subject, and to locate the importance of the Youth Olympic Games within the historical context. Without a doubt the introduction of the event has been the most significant event invention within the Olympic Movement since the first participation of women at the Olympic Games in Paris in 1900 and the establishment of the Olympic Winter Games in 1924⁴. Not only is it important for the IOC to demonstrate its involvement in the education of the athlete but even more so for the athletes themselves who will face these new developments. However, despite IOC claiming that education is at the forefront of the new event, the questions remains if the Olympic motto “Higher, Faster, Stronger” has to be changed into “Highest, Fastest, Youngest” in relation to the YOG as the connection between young athletes and high-performance is inevitable? With a lack of analysis on the YOG, this research is of potential significance. The investigation continues, then, with the following chapter, a review of literature closely related to the research project.

⁴ Since 1960 the Paralympic Games are also officially recognized by the IOC. However, despite being awarded to a host city together with the Olympic Games since 2001 and held a couple of weeks after the Olympic Games in the same venues (International Paralympic Committee, 2011), the Paralympic Games are organised by the International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and therefore is not an IOC event.

2. Literature Review

It has already been pointed out that there is major gap in research and studies on the YOG mainly because the event has only recently been added to the Olympic Movement. However, the broad environment of the Olympic Movement in which the YOG have been situated, suggests the relevance of wider theoretical perspectives within Olympic research, and of themes within the academic literature which are closely related to the staging of the event. Consequently, there are three major areas of concern which will be discussed in the Literature Review section of this essay. These are a) critical sociological perspectives on the Olympic Movement in general and young people in particular; b) the modern adoption of Olympism and the importance of Youth; c) the emergence of the awareness of athlete education. Therefore this Literature Review will identify and explain core themes within the academic sphere of Olympic research and sport sociology in order to address the main research questions of this research project. The literature findings will help to interpret and analyse the findings from the interviews with the YOG participants and the implementation of the YOG but will also underpin the research questions which partly evolve from the literature.

2.1 Critical sociological perspectives on the Olympic Movement and young people

Despite the fact that the subjects within this study have all been YOG participants of the German team, the critical sociological views which are closely linked to this study, will mainly be taken from English-writing researchers. This is due to the fact that the German sociology is preoccupied with the practical questions about sport and consequently withdraws from some classical research questions and the critical analysis that comes with it (Merkel, 2002). Merkel argues that the sociology of sport in Germany is in need of a different, more innovative approach through which they are able to challenge “dominant conceptions” (p.146). Therefore the main focus of the critical, almost radical sociological perspectives of this literature review will lie on the concept by Sugden and Tomlinson (2002) in which a conflict society is assumed, which has to be identified and analyzed in relation to the particular forms of power which dominate this society (p.18). This concept becomes in particular important when analysing a new event so closely linked to the Olympic Games as the Olympic Movement has been subject to constructive critique of the critical sociologists in the past.

General accounts of sociological analysis of the Olympic Movement are wide spread in academic literature (see Roche, 2000; Girginov & Parry, 2005; Toohey & Veal, 2007; Chappelet & Kübler-Mabbott, 2008). They concentrate on the basic concepts around the staging of the Olympic Games and therefore give a rather descriptive outline of themes surrounding it. However, as already mentioned, it is more important to discuss the more critical perspectives of the Olympic Games in

order to compile a coherent and thorough analysis of the Youth Olympic Games. There has been a considerable amount of critique voiced by academics that the Olympic Movement emphasizes the global consumer culture over the Olympic values: this is closely related to one of the key questions of this study, the question on the intention behind staging the YOG as another high-performance event. One of the most revolutionary articles concerning critical mega-event or 'spectacle' analysis has been compiled by Tomlinson (2002) based on the theory of critical sociology. He emphasizes that it is not only important "what might go on 'before our very eyes' at the spectacle, but what may well be going on behind the gloss of a spectacular event" (p.45), providing academics with the theoretical background for an analysis of a mega-event like the YOG. He pledges for a much more thorough critique of the 'spectacle' in order to answer the questions of "who produces the sport spectacle, how and why the spectacle is staged and performed, and what the spectacle both means and masks" (p.57). What this means in concrete terms for the events of the Olympic Movement can be found in Tomlinson's critique of the Olympic Games which can be applied directly to an analysis of the YOG. Tomlinson (2004 & 2005) both argues that the Olympic Movement supports an affirmation of the global consumer culture rather than the historically-rooted principles of universal participation and international values such as friendship, peace and harmony. Consequently the Olympics become 'Disneyfied', meaning that they have an increased economic infrastructure embodying all values of consumerism, rather than being recognized as a historically-rooted phenomenon which attracts successive audiences, embodying forms of human endeavor and a display of cultural productions (Tomlinson, 2004: p.162). However as the whole Olympic

Movement operates according to the 'disneyfied' principles, new additions like the YOG should be analysed in the same way. A similar approach has also been adopted by Eichberg (2004) who discusses the English sport model (effectiveness and production result) and the Scandinavian sport model (aesthetics and movement), arguing that the Olympic Movement has adopted an identity of production. With this he means that achievement sports are in the focus of the Olympic Games but also that "Olympism has entered an alliance with the market system" (p.74). Therefore additional events just become another part of this system despite being promoted as carriers of the Olympic values, which is an argument also offered by Cashman (2004). Drawing on the concept of the contemporary global sport system, his critique of the Olympic Movement, which encompasses changes within Post-Olympism and the IOC's inability to adapt itself to global trends, might equally also apply to the YOG. A recent application of these critical theoretical perspectives on the Olympic Movement, which is of particular interest for this study as it discusses Youth and Action sports, has been made by Thorpe & Wheaton (2012). Looking at the appeal of alternative sports as part of the Olympic Games' program, they argue that inclusion of such sports help to modernise the Olympic Movement and to attract a younger audience because teenagers represent an enormous market for sports, very similar to an argument by Bush et al. (2004). However, many action sports do not want to become part of the mainstream. They conclude that

Attempting to modernise the Olympic movement and tap into the lucrative youth market, we have seen the IOC introduce an array of new action sports, often fast-tracking their inclusion via incorporation under existing sports with little knowledge of the

unique cultural values or practical requirements of action sports participants (p.189).

Subsequently, this conclusion has to be taken into consideration when discussing another new 'invention' of the IOC which is also so closely linked to the experience of young people, as the efforts of the IOC to make the Olympic Games relevant to young people and young athletes (see Wheaton, 2005) might rather be a response to global trends than an endorsement of the importance of combining education and sport. Lenskyj (2008) argues that the youth market has already been targeted and exploited by Olympic sponsors in order to socialize "children to become global consumers" (p.117). Digel (2010b) summarizes this notion in the brief statement "life is completely capitalized and marketed" (p.3029), which has to be taken as a starting point for a critical analysis of the YOG if the Olympic Movement is so influenced by this 'life' as Tomlinson and colleagues argue. According to Digel (2010a) "Olympism needs to find a place as a significant actor in world culture" (p.2676) and the YOG might just be a path to find this place.

Coming from a perspective informed by the Figurational Sociology of Norbert Elias, Barnard et al. (2008) also pay attention to the discrepancy between 'Olympism' and the realities of the modern Olympics in practice. They examine the legacies of the Sydney and Beijing Olympics, arguing that they are more closely linked to the modern consumption process which is characteristic for global sports rather than the Olympic heritage. Drawing on the IOC Marketing Director's efforts to re-establish the Olympic brand and the connection to Olympism, they realize that the "heritage of the ancient world seems to matter less in practice than the extent to which the history of modern games reinforces and expresses the broader

globalization of Western achievement sport” (p.2055). Consequently the Olympic heritage becomes only an instrument in order to create an Olympic legacy based on economic values, which has been stated by non-figurational sociologists, too (see MacAloon, 2008 and Gratton, 2008). Sport and the Olympics have to be understood in the context of sportization, a concept which emphasizes the commodification process and excitement in modern sport, and it represents significant observations for those concerned with exploring the issues of the Olympic Movement and the value and meaning of new events. The importance of these global (economic) trends within the Olympic Movement which can also be found in Maguire (1999) and Maguire (2005) has led to the critical perspectives being adopted by researchers in studies of power and the Olympic Movement.

The role of politics has also been widely discussed in this relation to hosting major (Olympic) sporting events (see Cornelissen, 2010 and Roche, 2000) and has added a further sociologically informed dimension to the discussion. Cornelissen (2010) argues that upcoming global political powers are urgently aiming to host sporting events as it helps them to reinforce their international integration. However, as many countries such as Singapore do not have the requirements to host Olympic Games or the Football World Cup, new events like the YOG might have been introduced in order to create an opportunity for these countries to stage a ‘major’ sporting event. Consequently, the importance of politics can neither be underestimated in an analysis of mega-events (Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006) nor can the political intentions of the IOC be left out. Kidd (2005) touches on the fact that the IOC’s hegemony is trying to protect the Olympic myths in order to

maintain its political status and argues that “the IOC has fought fiercely to preserve its monopoly over the modern Games and the naturalisation of Olympic history” (p.145). He discusses alternative versions of the Olympic Games such as the Workers’ Olympics and the Gay Games which are able to challenge and improve the Olympic Movement. Nevertheless he suggests that the IOC has to move away from its survival instincts and the protection of its statutes in order to promote Coubertin’s vision of the Games. With the emphasis of the newest addition of the Olympic Movement, the YOG, supposedly not being on high-performance sport and commerce, Kidd (2009) sees his appeal being partly realized as “the YOG provide a potentially new avenue for the Olympic Movement to strengthen the base of participation among children and youth” (p.18) despite it still focusing on high-performance sport as well.

What these arguments and discussions suggest is that there is an inherent tension between the Olympic Movement and its historical roots based on the Olympic values and amateur sport and the IOC’s tendency to adjust the Olympic Games to the global consumer market and capitalist values. These arguments raise wider questions concerning the implementation and staging of the YOG and the role of the sporting participant within the Olympic environment in particular.

2.2 Modern 'Olympism' and the importance of Youth

Kidd's account above has to be seen to represent a recent trend by those promoting the historical roots of the Olympic Movement and Olympism, in challenging the IOC's global consumer culture based decision-making and in demonstrating the importance of the Olympic values in particular regarding Youth and youth sport. A significant and growing work has drawn around these problems of the Olympic Movement. An important contribution to this debate has been made by Doll-Tepper (2009) in her discussion on Olympism and Youth, which outlines the present developments affecting young people from an Olympic perspective. By drawing on contemporary problems young people are facing in the modern world, such as health problems and individualisation, she argues that all members of the Olympic Movement have a key responsibility in encouraging and offering access to sport (p.17). According to her, the question arises as to whether sport should be a mirror of, or a role model for society and she is thus not taking the broader sociological and political contexts above into consideration. Nevertheless, she addresses the YOG as "a tremendous new platform to inspire today's youth" (p.15) because the cultural and educational programmes offer new opportunities to attract new people. Realizing that the Olympic values are missing in the media to a large extent, the YOG could therefore have been implemented to both tackle the lack of importance of the Olympic values within the Olympic Movement but also in order to rationally enhance the public perception of the IOC. What Doll-Tepper (2009) exposes is that despite the efforts to implement the historical roots of Olympism, the IOC is still facing major challenges in this regard, an opinion shared

by Reppold Filho (2008). In his account of Olympism, he addresses that sport is not only an activity but “also a formative and developmental influence, contributing to the improvement of the individual characteristics of personality and social life” (p.3). However, the Olympic Movement certainly lacks emphasis on these aspects and therefore Reppold Filho argues that there should be more actions developed for the youth by the IOC. Just like Doll-Tepper (2009), he exposes the uneasy and contradictory relationship of “practical aspects of Olympism as it relates to Olympic education” although several studies have addressed the importance of sport related to fair play (Loland, 2002), social values (Coalter, 2001), environmental education and teamwork (Long, 2002) and criminality (Waddington, 2000). In an important article within the context of this research, Torres (2010) relates the existing theoretical discrepancy discussed above to the Youth Olympic Games. According to her, despite partially offering and embodying certain values of Olympism, the YOG innovations have to be deepened in order to fully meet the goals of the Olympic Movement. Therefore she concludes that the IOC is in a way “returning” to its philosophical roots with an emphasis on education although there are many doubts of the staging of the event by Olympic researchers. Torres (2010) differs, however, from the perspective adopted by Doll-Tepper and Reppold Filho as she critiques the close connection to the Olympic Games and the Westernized sports, a critique also addressed by Kidd (2009) and Hoberman (2004), and therefore the event only mirrors the educational rationality within the YOG rather than the Olympic Movement in general.

The awareness of the problems between Olympism and Youth within Olympic research can also be exemplified in the accounts of Wassong (2006) and Müller (2004). Wassong refers to the Olympic Games still primarily based on educational values despite its struggle against doping and the growing commercialization and is therefore very much in contrast to the critique by Tomlinson (2005) and the critical sociologists. However, despite this acknowledgement, he also realizes that there have been major failures within the Olympic Movement in its quest to promote these values and implement them into the Olympic Games in particular. He argues that

teaching and understanding principles of Olympic education demand time that is often compromised in the face of other priorities by athletes. Their time-budget is controlled by capacious training plans and by a packed competition calendar. There is almost no time left for visiting conferences or sessions at the IOC in order to listen to lectures and discussions on the practical relevance of Olympic education. One has to take this limited time-budget into account when looking for possibilities to improve an in-depth understanding of Olympic education among athletes.
(p.226)

This analysis almost sounds like a perfect academic reasoning for the implementation of the YOG in which there has supposedly been such an emphasis on culture and education. He realizes the lack of educational preparation of (Olympic) athletes as role models for young people and identifies that this is a major area of concern for the Olympic Movement and therefore suggests direct educational programmes for athletes. However, the article misses out on the fact that there might be a major discrepancy between the ideas of the IOC and the experiences of the participating athletes themselves. Wassong's paper is very much informed by Müller (2004) who exemplifies a similar approach to Olympic

education, examining the question of how far Olympic education is a revival of the educational ideas of the Ancient Greeks, or whether its purpose is to bring credibility to the marketing of the Olympic symbols. He takes Pierre de Coubertin's educational intentions as a starting point in order to plead for the importance of Olympic education of and through the Olympic athletes. Müller also admits that the political, commercial and drug-related incidents around the Olympic Games have led to it not being perceived as exemplary and not taken seriously educationally (p.14). Similar to Wassong he sees the only possibility in the involvement of athletes in Olympic Education as they are the role models which have to commit to the Olympic values in both "their actual sporting activities and in their public pronouncements on fair-play" (p.15). The athletes have of course to be educated in order to be able to be a role model, and programmes like the Culture and Education Programme at the YOG have supposedly been created on the basis of theoretical concepts brought forward by Müller (2004).

Just like Wassong and Müller, Binder (2007) also uses the very basic principles of Olympism in order to discuss the importance of Olympic education and how it can be taught practically. However, her paper differs from the previous discussed articles in the sense that she presents the practical issues related to the implementation of an "international Olympic education project" (p.67) as she discusses different projects in relation to fair play. She concludes that "through integrating sport and physical activity with culture" (p.73) new ways of doing and being, informed by the Olympic values such as fair play and respect, can be achieved. Thus, she is arguing along the lines of Parry (2003), who also addresses the Olympic education in practice in the example of the British Olympic Academy

(BOA). He also emphasizes the importance of education but makes specific reference to the significance of youth within the historical roots of the Olympic Movement. Arguing that the “the early Olympic education of the athlete is often shamefully neglected by responsible agencies” (p.4), he observes a need for Olympic education becoming an essential, genuine part of athlete preparation.

Therefore one can conclude that he is also emphasizing the importance of an Olympic education without referring to the general basic problems of Olympic sport as the critical sociologists address them. However, it is important to take this side of Olympic research into consideration when critically discussing the YOG as the ideas and visions behind the YOG are highly informed by such theoretical concepts of Binder, Müller, Parry and Wassong.

2.3 Athlete’s Education and Career Transition

The third and final part of this literature review will concentrate on the importance of education within an athlete’s career. This is of major significance for this study as the main reason behind the staging of the YOG is the educational value of the event and therefore a turn within IOC policies. Education for elite athletes has been of concern for researchers for a very long time despite the ignorance of international sports governing bodies to emphasize its importance. Rosenberg (1984) recognizes a indifference within sport’s basic structures to “preparing the athlete for his or her post-playing days and the additional social pressures which create adjustment obstacles” (p.246), and a consequence that

many athletes have problems to make this transition. He argues that an athlete cannot pre-plan the transition on his own and therefore needs the educational tools to be in a position to do so. Sixteen years later, Lavalée and Wylleman (2000) compiled an overview of several theories related to an athlete's various career transitions in sports, arguing that the more complex high-performance sport gets, the more emphasis should be on educating athletes in order to enable them to cope with their personal life during and after their career. Despite the awareness of these problems and theories connected to the end of an athlete's career, David (2005) argues that athletes "may suffer for the rest of their lives from their lack of education" (p.182). He outlines that many athletes are unable to finish secondary education because of training procedures and because parents and coaches become "obsessed about their child's sporting career" (p.183) and he criticizes the assumption that there is hardly any chance of success if education is continued throughout a professional sporting career. However, for David the examples of tennis players such as Lindsay Davenport, Arnaud Clément, Serena and Venus Williams show that it is possible to reach the top-level within a sport without leaving school. Thus, David goes even as far as to argue that education is a fundamental right for all human beings and therefore global sporting organisations like the IOC should be much more involved in the support for athletes in this respect and the IOC certainly sees the YOG as the major flagship for its involvement in the education of athletes. A quite similar approach, based on the importance of Human Rights and Education has been made by Giulianotti (2004). He argues that young athletes who are entering into high-performance sport have a "serious deficit in other forms of education that would otherwise promote their personal

and social development” (p.361). Consequently, international sports governing bodies also have to address this issue in order to meet human right conventions. By drawing on the concept of the ‘sentimental education’, which involves seeing oneself in the shoes of the oppressed, Giulianotti makes a point for an education of the future generation of young athletes being educated so they recognize the importance of social values. Therefore education for athletes is not only needed in order to enhance one’s personality but also in order to meet the standards of Human Rights issues. However, athletes have to compromise their educational developments in favour of a successful sporting career and as research in sport psychology shows (see Lally & Kerr, 2005; Lally, 2007), only a minority of athletes will be able to make a living out of sport and therefore others have to think of educational alternatives to support themselves.

With a particular focus on the German education system, Conzelmann & Nagel (2003) also realize that athlete education is an increasingly important issue because the demands placed on high-performance athletes and in particular Olympic athletes have continuously intensified over the past decade and “it becomes more and more difficult to attain educational certificates in the course of the sports career” (p.277). However, the results of their study show that top-performance athletes generally have a better education and professional jobs than the German population. But this is only true for successful Olympic athletes and the number of German Olympic athletes who have graduated from university has decreased. It shows that despite some support measures which have been implemented into the German school and university systems, the importance of

education throughout a sporting career has also to be promoted on an international level.

2.4 Research Questions

Despite being separate fields of research on first view, the three different areas outlined in the literature review – critical sociology, new trends within Olympic research, and the education of the athlete – have to be seen in connection when discussed with regard to the YOG. It results that the general tension between the historical educational Olympic values and the modern capitalist marketing system to which the Olympic system has been adjusted, is regarded as problematic from Olympic researchers as well as sociologists. However, whereas those adopting a critical perspective voice concern about the future of the Olympics and see a fundamental problem surrounding the Olympic Games, others such as Müller and Wassong see the possibilities in a change from within. The centrality of the athlete and a thorough education of “body and mind” as envisaged by Pierre de Coubertin play a major role within this change and researchers concerned with the education of elite athletes also emphasize the importance of such an educational approach. Therefore this research aims to analyze these newest efforts to combine Olympism, education and youth through the YOG and to fill the gap that exists in the research on the newest addition to the Olympic Movement. The research questions which evolve from the literature review are thus: A) Have the YOG been implemented as another high-performance event by the IOC? B) Has there been an

emphasis on education, and how has this been perceived by the athletes? C) What were the main gains for the athletes of taking part at the YOG? Guided by these questions but also through discussing the rationale of the IOC for the staging of the YOG, the research will help to situate the YOG within the Olympic Movement as well as within contemporary research on youth and sport. This is achieved through focusing on the experiences of participating athletes, a methodological approach which will be discussed in the following chapter.

3. Research Design

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical approach that is used to guide this research project is a Foucauldian⁵ approach which concentrates on the constitution of knowledge and discourses, and therefore de-centres the subject (Markula & Pringle, 2006). Despite the growth in Foucauldian approaches to sport, Andrews (1993) had criticized sport sociologists for not examining Foucault in-depth, although his approach offers “considerable relevance for the theoretical and substantive development of critical sport-orientated scholarship” (p.149). Sport scholars have engaged with Foucault’s theories related to sport in general and the Olympic Movement more specifically (see Chatziefstathiou & Henry, 2008; Laurendeau, 2008; Thorpe, 2008; Brown, 2009). Foucault utilizes the term “technologies” to reveal techniques by which the human subject constitutes themselves. Four types of technologies are identified: (1) Technologies of production⁶ (2) technologies of sign systems⁷ (3) technologies of power⁸ (4) technologies of the self⁹ (in Chatziefstathiou & Henry, 2008: p.1).

⁵ Michel Foucault was one of the most influential thinkers in the 20th century and has had a decisive influence on the reconceptualization of power in the social sciences, including sports studies.

⁶ which permit us to produce, transform or manipulate things

⁷ which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols or signification

⁸ which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject

⁹ which permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts conduct, and way of being in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality

However, the focus for this particular research project will be on the interrelation between the technology of power and the technology of the self. Foucault calls this interrelation, “governmentality” (Foucault, 1988) and governmentality is central to this proposed study. It can be argued that the IOC and the Olympic Movement produce through staging the YOG, certain technologies through which they hope to create specific effects towards education and dual career, and at the same time, it provides – through values and certain behaviours according to which athletes should live and participate – a technology of the self. These technologies are made explicit through discourse¹⁰, which captures the production of statements which gives meaning in a particular historical movement and defines and produces the objects of our knowledge. It is within the site of discourse where meanings are contested and power relations are determined. For example, Olympism “operates as a discourse that constructs what can meaningfully be said about amateur athletics,” (Laurendeau, 2008: p.1) and the Olympic Games. As the YOG are the newest addition to the Olympic Movement, this principle can also be applied to them, to study its discourses and technologies.

It is emphasized within studies of governmentality for example by Newman (2001) and Newman (2005) that new political discourses offer the subjects new aspects of interpretation, identity and legacies for their actions. However, Foucault’s theory of discourse does not offer any strategies in order to differentiate between discourse and actions. Newman (2005) writes that “the

¹⁰ systems of self-regulation and autonomy

subjects (...) may not hear the messages or they may refuse to listen" (p.211). Thus, studies on Foucault offer interesting answers to the questions of how political governance affects the interpretation of meanings but how those meanings are connected to the actions of an individual is not answered within his theory. Similarly, Fairclough (1992: p.45) argues that within discursive formations active social agencies are excluded in any meaningful sense. This is of course a major issue in a study where the emphasis lies not only on the analysis of institutions (IOC) but also on the analysis of subjects (YOG participants). However, Fairclough (1992) states that although they are ideologically positioned, they are also in a position in which they are able to act creatively and consequently subjects can also be active agents. He arrives at this point by drawing upon Gramsci's concept of hegemony because it theorizes the evolution of power and contributing as well as shaping the wider processes of power and change. Therefore the concept of hegemony is helping to overcome the problem of agencies through

providing for discourse both a matrix – a way of analysing the social practice within which the discourse belongs in terms of power relations, in terms of whether they reproduce, restructure or challenge existing hegemonies – and a model – a way of analysing discourse practice itself as a mode of hegemonic struggle, reproducing, restructuring and challenging existing orders of discourse. (Fairclough, 1992: p.95)

In light of this, Toby Miller (2009) argues that "an opposition between Foucault and Marxism is misplaced; (and that) these formations can be fruitfully combined" (p.182) and this becomes very important for the study on the YOG because the participants play a central role within the research. Foucault's theories can be utilized within a critical interpretive tradition (see Thorpe, 2008). John Hargreaves argues, for example, that through training and controlling the body, an

individual is able to defend itself against the control mechanisms of the state and other institutions (1986: p.168). Therefore it is important to show that institutions can have control over the body, but also how subjects experience their body as “the site of social struggle” (Ibid.: p.13).

3.2 Methodology

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to guide the methodological decisions within this project. Discourse analysis studies cultural meanings and how these meanings are connected to relations between people. It does not simply ask the direct question ‘why’, but rather internal and external reasons are considered in the exact form they are used, for example in texts or in interviews. It focuses on the descriptions and explanations which take place within the material. The way discourses are logical or not is not studied but there is more emphasis on how an interplay between texts occurs. The theoretical basis of social constructionism is linked to discourse analysis because they both have language as their starting point for the production of meanings. Social constructionism aims to account for the way in which a certain phenomenon is constructed and considered and within the theory it is argued that there are different ways of constructing phenomena. For example, a sentence or even a word can be viewed completely differently from another perspective¹¹. Therefore all human actions within

¹¹ This approach goes back to Max Weber’s *Verstehende Soziologie* that nothing is as it is but meanings of actions have to be examined from different angles. His aim was to “achieve an interpretive understanding of subjectively meaningful action which exposed the actors’ motives, at one level ‘the causes’ of actions, to view” (Jary and Jary, 1995: p.726).

sociology and consequently the sociology of sport must be interpreted. For Martin Heidegger, who developed the process of Hermeneutics, the influence of the historical and the cultural context was significant in the formation of human beings. In order to understand the meaning of “being there”, meaning has to be interpreted within the Hermeneutic phenomenology. Hermeneutic emphasizes that in order to understand and interpret one has to move from the whole to the specific and reverse. This process Heidegger labeled the Hermeneutic circle. For the understanding of the texts as applied in this research this means that they are based on a so-called pre-knowledge and are changed through more recent views. Through these new views, we create an adapted understanding which is modified again through new views. Gadamer established the understanding of a text on a historical pre-knowledge, which is changed through a re-evaluation and eventually leads to a modified pre-comprehension or comprehension, which undergoes its understanding through the modification. In this way the Hermeneutic circle can be used within this research project in order to look at the policy documents and the participants’ perception and vice versa. Thompson (1990) has made use of Hermeneutics in order to develop a methodological approach he labels “depth hermeneutics” for the analysis of modern culture. This concept has been adopted by Tomlinson (1992) who uses Thompson’s hermeneutic framework to analyse the Olympic Games and is also used by Gill Lines (2007) in her research on media sport audiences of young people. As in this research project, Lines contrasts the reception of young people with the representation of themes of different discourses in the sporting context which provides her with “a framework for much needed further interpretative and comparative work in the field” (p.671).

The CDA is based on a constructionist epistemology which focuses on the contextual and generated nature of a social phenomenon. If it is accepted that through language it is possible to access numerous versions of events, it means that those same events can be described in different discourses and representations of the world are thus different. Therefore links will be drawn between texts and official IOC and SYOGOC documents, discourses and historical and social contexts according to the three-dimensional approach by Fairclough (1992). As Fairclough points out, texts, discourses and the cultural and historical contexts should be analyzed in relation to each other in order to get an overall understanding of their relationship and relevance. This is the reason why a discourse analysis becomes vital in the examination of certain aspects of the Olympic Movement. The Olympic Movement is a global movement which affects people all over the world and is connected to other institutions. The IOC, as a worldwide present organisation, takes part in almost all discourses on sport and interplays with various other agents such as the media, sponsors, athletes, politicians and officials. In this particular case the discourses between the IOC concerning the YOG will be examined. However, this study is taking the discourse analysis even further by excavating the perspective of the subjects, the sporting participant. Young athletes who are placed in a sports world where 'winning by all means' has been at the centre of importance for a whole decade are faced with a switch through which the IOC wants to concentrate more on education. Thus it is important to give them a voice within this research as they are not only the ones who are affected by it but also who experienced it.

3.3 Data Sources, Collection and Data Analysis

The data sources used for this project provide insight into the discursive construction of the Youth Olympic Games and the importance of the event across two different levels of analysis: IOC policy and athletes. I chose these sources in order to contrast ways of thinking about the YOG across several influential contexts (Fairclough, 1992). As Sugden (2005) remarks “in the context of particular social hierarchies and networks of power, it is the task of the researcher to identify, gain access to, and share as many vantage points as possible” (p.206). If a researcher can do this and able to give as many insights and perspectives as possible, he is in a position which enables him to construct an interpretation which gives the most valid image of the researched and analyzed area. It follows for this study that it is important to talk to the athletes as well as analyzing policy documents as both aspects are significant for the creation of an overall representation of the YOG. Of course, this representation might not be valid from all perspectives; however, through taking into consideration as many angles as possible, the attempt is made to construct the most valid truth at this particular point in time. The aim of this research is to construct a truth which is not universally valid but certainly is the most valid truth from the researcher’s perspective as different levels are considered to construct the bigger picture.

My analysis of the IOC and SYOGOC is based on a collection of policy and educational documents, primarily related to the staging of the YOG and general IOC

politics. The policy documents are important because they reveal the conscious decision-making process of the enhanced importance of youth within the Olympic Movement. The central document which was used for identifying the main themes behind the YOG was the *Contributions XIII Olympic Congress Copenhagen 2009* document. This conference paper summarizes the core messages of the IOC as it gives insightful details on the IOC's position on education and on the YOG. The decision to use this particular document was based on accessibility, its recent publication date and the relevance to the YOG and youth within the Olympic Movement. In addition to that, several official IOC and SYOGOC documents which relate to the YOG such as Press Releases, Guides for the Organising Committee and Guides for Athletes, all of which can be found on the IOC's official website www.olympic.org and SYOGOC's official website www.singapore2010.sg, were examined. Just as the conference paper on the Copenhagen Congress, the quality of the other documents was assessed through Scott's (1990: p.6) four criteria: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning¹².

Because the data that had to be analyzed was very large and complex, a computer-assisted analysis with *NVivo*¹³ was conducted. Different researchers have raised concerns over the use of computer programmes. They argue that there is a tendency to over-code because it is easy to change codes, that the creative

¹² Authenticity: Is the evidence genuine and of unquestionable design? Credibility: Is the evidence free from error and distortion? Representativeness: Is the evidence typical of its kind, and, if not, is the extent of its untypicality known? Meaning: Is the evidence clear and comprehensible? (Bryman, 2004: p.381).

¹³ *NVivo* is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS), which allows the researcher to code text while working at the computer and retrieve the coded text. "The computer takes over the physical task of writing marginal codes, making photocopies of transcripts or field notes, cutting out all chunks of text relating to a code, and pasting them together" (Bryman, 2004: p.418). However, the researcher must still work very closely with the data as the data has to be interpreted, retrieved and put into the program.

control is being taken away and that it takes the researcher away from the data (Bryman, 2004, p.419). However, in this research, *NVivo* helped to draw comparisons between the data but also makes the analysis more thorough. Through the automatic creation of 'trees', I was urged to think more about possible connections between the different codes. Furthermore the programme offered so-called 'memos' through which important thoughts could be noted and it was very easy to trace back these thoughts.

My interview participants were 8 sixteen to eighteen year old German competitive athletes, who took part at the YOG in Singapore in 2010 and were willing to discuss their experiences. German athletes were more accessible for the researcher and as German is my native language, no language problems occurred. Therefore a purposive sample was created (Silverman, 2010: p.270), attempting to create a broad sample, with athletes from different educational backgrounds, different sports and of different gender. Despite the restricted possibilities to influence the sample, this was successful. During a first contacting phase all German National Sport Federations whose athletes participated at the YOG were contacted with most of them providing the contact details of their athletes. In a second step, the athletes were contacted and an interview date was arranged. I decided to include semi-structured, in-depth interviews in order to understand how "people talk through specific experiences in their lives" (Mason, 2002: p.64). The interview schedule which was used and designed according to academic guidelines (see Bryman, 2004; Gratton & Jones, 2010) can be found in Appendix II of this study. The questions within the schedule were rather broad and used only as a "reminder" of the issues that need to be explored throughout the interview.

Importantly, through using qualitative data, the conclusions about the theoretical approach were established inductively.

There is a common critique of qualitative studies whose results are not generalizable because not enough subjects take part in the specific study (Kvale, 1996: p.102) and the study is also of limited generalizability because the athletes are all from the German YOG team. However, as the purpose of the study was to gain 'rich' data rather than to get the largest possible sample, 'saturation' was achieved after the eight interviews so that no further data collection was needed. Saturation refers to the stage in the research process where the results of the interviews do not reveal anything new compared to the information that already exists (Gratton & Jones, 2010).

The interviews lasted for approximately thirty to forty minutes and four interviews were face-to-face interviews at the athletes' training ground, school or home. However, the four other interviews were conducted via video calls with the software program *Skype*¹⁴. This was due to the fact that the participants were geographically dispersed around Germany and in using this data collection method, costs could be reduced. Gratton and Jones (2010) argue that through online interviews the result will generally be shorter and "it is not possible to observe non-verbal reactions to questions" (p.168). No technological problems occurred through the use of *Skype* either, a reason why it has been used by research within qualitative studies before (see Pretto & Pocknee, 2008). Furthermore, the participants taking part in the *Skype* interviews were surprisingly more open and offered more information than the subjects in the face-

¹⁴ *Skype* is a software application that allows users to make voice and video calls and chats over the Internet

to-face interviews. This could be due to the fact that the participants were in a familiar environment and not inhibited by the researcher's presence. A reason for this observation can also be found within Martin Heidegger's theories. He argues that a person on the telephone can be nearer than a person next door if the person's attention, its understanding, its *Dasein* (being-there) is with the person he or she is speaking to: "Practical concern, understanding and states of mind (...) can make space stretch or contract" (Heidegger, 1924 in Collins & Selina, 1998: p.62). The same seems to have occurred with the participants doing the *Skype* interviews and therefore this method is absolutely valid within the research project.

3.4 Ethical Considerations

It is very important to note that ethical decisions are not to be considered separately from the overall research process but arise throughout it. In conducting interviews, ethical issues are one of the main concerns. Traditionally the three main considerations are 'Informed Consent', 'Confidentiality' and 'Consequences' (Lincoln and Denzin, 2005). 'Informed consent' is the process by which the interviewee after being truthfully informed by the researcher about the research and the interview process gives consent to taking part in the study. This process can be specifically problematic as to who should give the consent when children take part in the study. For the four participants who were not yet eighteen years old, parents were informed. All parents of the under-eighteen athletes and all eight participants signed the Informed Consent Form. Furthermore the study was explained to the participants and they were informed about the purpose of the

study with the support of an Information Sheet (see Appendix I). In the case of the online-interviews the information sheets were sent to the participants two days prior to the interview. The main ethical issue with regard to semi-structured interview is that it relies heavily on the answers on the subjects and in which direction the interview might go. Consequently, questions might be asked which are not prepared in advance. However this was taken into consideration by the researcher and of course the right to privacy and protection from harm was respected throughout this process (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005: p.142). In addition to receive informed consent, it is of major importance that confidentiality is given. This implies that private data which identifies the participants will not be reported and consequently the subject's names and other features will be changed in order to protect their privacy (UK Social Policy Association, 2009: p.5) Confidentiality is crucial within this particular research project and as the participants were asked to talk about authorities and specifically weaknesses of the YOG and other factors concerning their sporting career, absolute confidentiality was be offered to the participants. This is of major importance, as the young athletes stand at the beginning of their career and consequently rely heavily on external funding by governmental institutions such as the *Stiftung Deutsche Sporthilfe*¹⁵ and the *Deutscher Olympischer Sportbund*¹⁶. The ethical standpoint was taken that participants consequently only reveal information as a result of absolute confidentiality and breaking this agreement would be highly unethical. Consequently appropriate measures were taken in order to strike the balance

¹⁵ *Stiftung Deutsche Sporthilfe* is a foundation which supports German athletes financially and non-materially in compensation for their societal efforts on international competitions and the representation of Germany on an international level.

¹⁶ The German Sports Federation and National Olympic Committee

between protecting the validity and quality of the research data but which also provided anonymity for the participants. The participants were provided with individual pseudonyms to protect their identities.

4. The Youth Olympic Games introduced

As the YOG are a newly introduced event with different formats, this chapter gives an overview of the event in order to present the basic concepts needed to understand the discussion on the policy documents and the statements of the athletes. The idea of staging YOG was adopted by the IOC at its 119th Olympic Session in Guatemala City in July 2007 and it was quickly labeled “a flagship of the IOC’s strategy regarding young people” (International Olympic Committee, 2007a: p.1). On 21st February 2008, IOC president Jacques Rogge, who has been the main advocate of the event¹⁷, announced that the right to stage the first YOG would be handed to Singapore. However, the country faced a very short preparation time of only two and a half years in comparison to the preparation time Olympic host cities get¹⁸. Nevertheless the scale of the event, held from 14th to 26th August 2010, was exceptional. 3,522 athletes from 204 of the 205 National Olympic committees¹⁹ took part in the competitions with 1,900 media representatives and 1,871 officials being present at the event as well (International Olympic Committee, 2011: p.3). All official ceremonies that normally take place at the

¹⁷ Despite IOC president Jacques Rogge publicly being labelled the initiator of the Youth Olympic Games, the Austrian Johann Rosenzopf first came up with the idea of staging a global Olympic event for young people in 1998. However, the IOC ignored Rosenzopf’s idea at first and praised its president Jacques Rogge, who organised the European Youth Olympic Festival in the 1990s, for the invention. It was only after Rosenzopf proceeded against the IOC, that the IOC acknowledged his idea and sent him a certificate for his contribution to the Olympic Movement (Seele, 2010).

¹⁸ Olympic host cities are usually elected six to seven years before the event

¹⁹ Athletes from Kuwait took part as independent participants because their NOC had been suspended by the IOC on 1st August 2009 in order to protect the Olympic Movement in Kuwait from interference by the Kuwait public authorities

Olympic Games were held at the YOG, too. These included an Olympic torch relay through all continents²⁰, Opening and Closing ceremonies, Olympic oath, Olympic flag bearers and Olympic medal ceremonies. The Opening Ceremony of the Games was held on 14th August at 'The Float@Marina Bay', a floating stage. Approximately 27,000 spectators attended the event, which took place against a backdrop of the city's skyline (Ngoo, 2010). The ceremony was very similar to the Opening Ceremony at Olympic Games, however, the officials such as IOC president Rogge did not wear any ties which emphasized the less formal appearance of the YOG.

The athletes competed in 201 events within the 26 official sports (see Appendix V) and depending on the sport the athletes participated in, they had to be 15, 16, 17 or 18 years old on 31st December 2010. The age groups participation was defined by the IOC and the relevant International Federation. For example, in order to compete in the Cycling events, athletes had to be born between 1st January 1992 and 31st December 1993 (Cycling Australia, 2009: p.1). The sports programme was identical to the one being held at the up and coming 2012 London Olympic Games (SYOGOC, 2010a). In some cases, the events differed from the Olympic Games. Basketball, for example, was played according to the 3 on 3 formula, with teams of three athletes playing against each other on one half-court. In other events, the equipment was adjusted to the young athletes' developmental abilities. For example, the men's javelin weight was reduced from 800 to 700 grams (Torres, 2010: p.11). However, the most significant characteristic in terms of sporting events of the YOG were the numerous mixed-gender and mixed-NOC

²⁰ The cities were Berlin (Germany); Dakar (Senegal); Mexico City (Mexico); Auckland (New Zealand) and Seoul (South Korea)

team events. For example, in the 4 x 100 metres medley and the 4 x 100 metres freestyle relay in swimming, boys and girls from one National Olympic Committee (NOC) competed together in one team. In Modern Pentathlon, teams included athletes from different NOCs. Another example is that of the mixed team event in fencing in which nine continental teams consisting of three men and three women were formed for the competition. The IOC also decided not to publish an official medal table in order to emphasize that the sporting competition between nations is not the main focus of the event²¹. In the individual sports, NOCs could only nominate up to 70 athletes and only two teams from each NOC could compete in the different team sports in order to enable athletes from smaller countries to take part in the YOG.

A further new aspect of the YOG is the Culture and Education Programme (CEP), “where the objective is to share the Olympic values with the young athletes as well as with young people around the world, and to discuss important themes linked to the practice of sport as well as to global and societal challenges” (International Olympic Committee, 2011: p.4). The programme was held during the Games and the athletes were given the possibility to take part in workshops, forums and other activities. According to SYOGOC, the athletes had the possibility to:

²¹ However, different newspapers and online platforms such as the unofficial Olympic information platform *Around the Rings* published medal tables despite the IOC recommending that this should not be done. For example, a medal table can be found at <<http://www.aroundtherings.com/articles/view.aspx?id=35469>>.

- Learn about Olympism, the Olympic Movement, and global and sport issues;
- Contribute by looking beyond themselves so as to make a positive impact on the people and environment around them;
- Interact with other participants and facilitate the learning of new ideas and exploration of new cultures;
- Celebrate the Olympic values and the diversity of world cultures, while experiencing the power of the Olympic spirit to unite diverse cultures and peoples. (SYOGOC, 2010b)

The CEP was formed around the five main themes:

- ‘Olympism’,
- ‘Skills Development’,
- ‘Well-Being and Healthy Lifestyle’, ‘
- Social Responsibility’
- ‘Expression’

(International Olympic Committee, 2011)

The seven CEP formats were²²:

- ‘Chat with the Champions’
- ‘Discovery Activity’
- ‘World Cultural Village’
- ‘Community Project’
- ‘Arts and Culture’

²² See Appendix VI for a detailed overview of the different CEP formats

- 'Island Adventure'
- 'Exploration Journey'

(International Olympic Committee, 2011)

In addition to the CEP, Athlete Role Models (ARMs) were invited to Singapore to mentor the athletes who took part at the Games. They encouraged the athletes to participate in the CEP whilst taking part in the activities themselves. They also featured in the 'Chat with the Champions' podium discussions.

The athletes lived in the Youth Olympic Village (YOV) which had a capacity of 5000 beds. The Village was at "the heart of the Youth Olympic Games" (IOC, 2011: p.3) on the campus of the Nanyang Technological University (NTU) and was divided into a Residential Zone (RZ) and the Village Square (VS). The athletes had their rooms within the RZ but there were also several training facilities for the athletes, a dining hall, a Digital Media Centre including an Internet centre, a medical clinic and doping sample collection spaces (SYOCOG, 2010d). The VS was in the middle of the Village. Apart from the World Culture Village exhibition, musical performances, concerts, cultural and educational programmes, chat with Champions, and various sport-related forums were held there. All participating athletes had to stay in the YOV for the whole duration of the YOG.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 The Interviews

While the previous chapter – covering the IOC policy and the staging of the YOG – illustrated the main facts and figures of the YOG, it is unable to shed light onto how athletes actually interpret these ideas and the event. However, my conversations with the athletes provide insight into how they took part at the YOG whilst being confronted with the educational implications the organisers had for the participants. As set out in Chapter 3, the key components of the study were German participants of the YOG. During this stage of the research, eight individual, qualitative interviews were undertaken in April and May 2011. The interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 40 minutes, the length largely determined by the time of constraints of participants. An interview guide (see Appendix II) was prepared in advance, using the same interview guide for all participants. It was based around a number of key topic areas and key questions related to the research questions and the literature related to the study. The explanation to the methodological approach and the justification in relation to the interviews are discussed in Chapter 3. The real names of the participants have not been used in the analysis; instead they are referred to as numbered participants. Some biographical details to each participant can be found in the interviews in Appendix III. These have been included to demonstrate the wide range of participants concerning the sports they took part in, their gender and their age.

The different themes used within the discussion emerged through a manual working process and using *Nvivo*. The objective of the qualitative analysis was to identify various categories embedded in the unstructured data set that represented athletes' perceptions of the YOG. The eight athlete interviews were transcribed to produce 78 pages of typed text (see Appendix III). At first, the data was manually organised through coding the text and breaking it down into manageable chunks. The interview transcripts were divided into main units and tags were created which gave information about the different units. Those tags were compared and grouped together so that specific categories of information emerged. These categories provided the main organizing structure for further analysis. Categories were constantly modified and combined as the classification system was refined. During the interview process, athletes were prompted with open-ended questions about the CEP, their high-performance career and their attitude towards Olympism, and consequently the categories fitted naturally back into these major components. The final stage involved using the *Nvivo* software to divide the units and categories into the different events at the YOG and stages of the athlete's career (for example: Opening Ceremony, Youth Olympic Village, Importance of School, Parents...). Thus, the Qualitative Data Analysis Software was not used to impose quantitatively driven categories onto the data but rather to examine the different categories for their content and to compare similarities and differences between the interviews and the IOC policy documents. Consequently, *Nvivo* was not only an add-on but an important tool throughout the analysis. The *Nvivo* Tree Nodes can be found in Appendix IV.

The results of the interviews and the policy analysis below are organised and discussed around the key themes, the research questions and the themes identified in the literature review. The discussion links back to the main points of interest from the questions that emerged out of the literature review. The data collected from the interviews offers fresh and useful insight into the experience and opinions of the YOG participants as well as providing an interesting comparison to the data gained from the IOC documents. It is considered how the similarities and differences between the policy and the athletes' constructions of the YOG as an educational event converge to construct relevant views of the newly introduced event as a result of the hermeneutical analysis applied.

5.2 The Youth Olympic Games as a high-performance event

It evolves from the analysis of the IOC policy documents on the YOG such as newsletters, press releases and speeches of IOC members that the YOG's emphasis was on it not being a high-performance event in the first place. Rather, the first and foremost "vision of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) is to inspire young people around the world to participate in sport and adopt and live by the Olympic values" (International Olympic Committee, 2010). Furthermore, six of the eight YOG's main objectives are dealing with sport participation and education (See Appendix VI). Thus, the vision clearly displays the IOC's awareness that it has a "key responsibility in encouraging and offering access to sport and to competitive sport for all ages and groups" (Doll-Tepper, 2009: p.17). The results of the data obtained, however, questions if an event like the YOG supports this aim to reach the youth of

the world and inspire young people to actually take part in sport. Similar to Pound (2008) who argues that the YOG are aimed at athletes that are already within the sport system, one has to look at the YOG as a high-performance event in order to justify the educational claims made about it. First of all, if one looks at the sports programme of the YOG, one realizes that all 26 sports in which competitions are held at the 2012 London Olympic Games were part of the YOG which reflects the close connection between the Olympic Games and the YOG (see Appendix V). This is despite Jacques Rogge arguing that “these Youth Olympic Games should not be seen as mini-Olympic Games” (Rogge, 2010: p.33). Rogge’s claim is also not supported by the athletes who certainly compared the YOG to the Olympic Games as a result of the competitions which were staged in Singapore. Asked about the competitions, Subject C answered: “*Ja, das war wie bei richtig Olympia, kann man sich so vorstellen* (Yes, it was like at the real Olympic Games, you can imagine it like that)”. Therefore the reality of the event as experienced by the interviewed athletes disputes the claims by the IOC for staging the YOG. In fact, it confirms Tomlinson’s (2002) argument that there is a discrepancy between “what might go on ‘before our very eyes’ at the spectacle, but what may well be going on behind the gloss of a spectacular event” (p.45), an argument which is drawn through the entire discussion of the research project because of different claims from different perspectives being made. This means for the specific case of the YOG being presented as an event held to activate young people around the world that these claims have to be questioned.

Analysing the opinions of IOC members at the Olympic Congress in Copenhagen in 2009, one realizes that there are also concerns within the IOC. For

example, similar to Pound (2008), IOC member Anita Defrantz poses the question “What is the purpose of having another set of sports events for young people that excludes all but the most advanced athletes?” (International Olympic Committee, 2009b: p.468), casting doubt upon the fulfillment of the vision of the YOG through a high-performance event. The fact that only a few privileged athletes were able to take part at the YOG has also been sensed by the athletes: “*jetzt sind hier nur die Besten* (only the best are here now)” (Subject B). This underlines the emphasis on elite sports rather than increasing access to sports opportunities and even access to education for unprivileged and inactive young people. Thus one can argue that through the staging of the YOG, the IOC has added another event to its “identity of production” (Eichberg, 2004: p.69), which is characterized by competition rather than participation. This is also emphasized through the hard and complicated qualification process the German athletes had to go through in order to qualify for Singapore. Whereas Subject C was “*nicht so optimistisch, dass ich das schaffen werde. Ich dachte, erster internationaler Wettkampf, puh, starke Gegner im internationalen Bereich* (not very optimistic that I would make it. I thought first international competition, uff, strong opponents on an international level)”, Subject D outlined the complicated qualification process in his sport:

Und so ja man muss sich erst so über die deutschen Hallenmeisterschaften, man musste der Beste in deinem Jahrgang sein. Und von dem Jahrgang darunter. Und dann nach Moskau. Das war der europäische Qualifikationwettkampf und wenn man da unter die, das war auch noch nicht einmal klar unter wie viel ersten man da sein muss, und dann ging es weiter nach Singapur. (And yes, at first one had to be the best of his age group at the German Indoor Championships. And also the best from the age group below. And then to Moscow. That was the European qualification competition and only if you were among the best ..., we did not

even know amongst the best how many you had to be, and then you could go on to Singapore).

These experiences of the athletes clearly highlight the performance-orientated basis of the YOG from an athlete's perspective. Therefore one can say that the IOC's educational and inspiring vision has not only to be suitably addressed because of the YOG being a high-performance event but even more so because even young elite athletes perceived it as a major challenge to qualify. Consequently one has to agree with the critique voiced by Pound (2008) and IOC member Defrantz that the YOG are only accessible through established high-performance sport structures. Eichberg's (2008) claim that the Olympic Movement is built upon an "identity of production" and Cashman's (2004) critique that additional events such as the YOG become part of this system despite being promoted as carriers of other values seem to be justified regarding the YOG. Although the IOC claims that the YOG are a "flagship event that illustrated the IOC determination to reach out to young people" (International Olympic Committee, 2010a: p.11) – a determination which is without a doubt very important and respectable – the policy documents and the experiences of the athletes reveal that high-performance was an important aspect of the event.

As shown, despite claiming that the YOG were primarily an inspiring event to increase participation, the IOC certainly staged a high-performance event which has to be seen in contrast to the claims it makes about the YOG. However, one has to say that the policy documents also clearly reveal that if the IOC is talking about the YOG as a competition, it refers to it as the best sporting competition for this particular age group. For example, Jacques Rogge argues that as a result of the

YOG, athletes will get prepared “for their future Olympic life” (Rogge, 2010: p.33) and that “young people attending the Youth Olympic Games will go on to become Olympians” (Rogge, 2008: p.9). With only the best athletes of the world being able to compete at the Olympic Games, however, one has to assume that he considers the athletes at the YOG to be the best athletes of their age groups. Furthermore, the 2010 Progress Report of the IOC clearly states that “sporting excellence” was showcased at the event in Singapore and most importantly the first objective of the YOG is “to bring together the world’s best young athletes and celebrate them” (International Olympic Committee, 2009a: p.2; Appendix VI). Consequently, the IOC claims that the YOG is not only a high-performance event with an educational emphasis but that the YOG give the best athletes a platform to “measure themselves against some of the best of their age groups” (Rogge, 2010: p.34). However, just as there is a contrast between the IOC’s educational vision and the high-performance reality, there is a discrepancy between the IOC claiming that the YOG are the most important competition and the perception of the athletes. The athletes did not perceive the YOG as their main sporting event of the year. For example, the swimmers and track and field athletes interviewed argued along the lines of Subject A that “*das Problem war eben bei uns, man hatte sich jetzt eben nicht auf die YOG spezialisiert. Von daher war jetzt schon ein bisschen die Spannung raus* (For us the problem was that none of us prepared specifically for the YOG. Therefore the tension was a bit gone already)”. This was also due to the fact that the YOG did not have any direct effect on world rankings or the funding of the athletes so that most of them argued that winning a medal was only a “*sekundäres Ziel* (secondary goal)” (Subject F). This was enhanced through the fact that each

NOC was guaranteed four places at the YOG which certainly enhanced the international character of the event but has to be seen in stark contrast to the IOC's claim that the world's best athletes competed in Singapore. For seven of the eight interviewed athletes, the YOG were not the most important sporting competition of the year.

These results, then, show that the IOC did transfer the YOG into a high-performance event – with an educational aspect – but the athletes did not experience it as much as a world class sporting event as the IOC would have liked. The IOC claims that sporting excellence was showcased but the athletes are of a different opinion that their emphasis was rather on other events. For them, it was more about taking part than winning medals. For example, Subject D told the researcher *“das hat mich schon angespornt, nur viel weniger jetzt mit Leistung sondern einfach nur um dabei zu sein* (of course this gave me an extra boost, but much less for my performance but simply to take part in it)” and Subject B concluded that *“Es ging wirklich erstmal nur ums Dasein* (It was really primarily about being there)”. Additionally most athletes said that because the YOG were the biggest competition they had ever taken part in, they were more excited of being at the YOG and the size of the event that the sport competitions were perceived far less important than claimed by the IOC: *“Ich fand das richtig, also wirklich richtig, richtig groß.* (I found it really, I mean really, really big)” (Subject G).

Consequently one can say that whereas the IOC is following its principles of high-performance sport and Eichberg's “identity of production”, the young athletes at the YOG were merely satisfied with the experience of being at the YOG rather

than it being an event that triggered their competitiveness. Thus, Torres' (2010) conclusion that the aim of the YOG should be an event "that touches young Olympians beyond their competitive feats" (p.21) seems to have been fulfilled. However, this is due to the athletes' attitude towards the YOG rather than how the IOC attempted to represent the event. Therefore one can say that the CDA of the IOC documents and the interviews with the athletes has helped to deconstruct the YOG in two very clear and important ways concerning its high-performance status. Firstly, there is a discrepancy between the IOC's fundamental vision of inspiring people around the world to take part in sport and the fact that the YOG were an event staged only for a few privileged athletes. Reppold-Filho (2008) argues that "it is important to bear in mind that Olympism involves values of participation and cooperation and focuses not only on elite athletes but also on all persons" (p.3) and the IOC's vision certainly displays its awareness. However, the practical implementation at the YOG and the athlete's experiences opens up a completely different perspective. Of equal importance is the second result from the analysis, that whilst the IOC staged a high-performance event and claimed that sporting excellence was displayed, the athletes did not perceive the YOG the pinnacle of their sporting calendar.

5.3 Educational aspects

Similar to the IOC's claims about high-performance at the YOG, the athletes' perceptions were crucial in helping to deconstruct the educational aspects of the event. Although the previous part of this discussion has shown that the YOG was staged as a high-performance event, the vision to increase global participation has

still to be carefully considered. There was also undoubtedly an educational aspect present in Singapore which was, however, aimed at the participating athletes.

Through the YOG, the IOC and SYOGOC aimed to:

- prepare a generation of young elite athletes to have an ethical approach to sport, with strong values (excellence, friendship and respect) and principles (universality, sustainability, no discrimination);
- educate young people on the importance of sport for their health and their social integration;
- inform young people about the dangers linked to sport, such as doping and training to excess; and
- propose to the youth of the world, both present in the host city and linked together through interactive digital communication tools, to share a once in a lifetime intense and emotional moment of solidarity and humanism, highlighting in particular the strong Olympic symbols (torch relay, flag, anthem).

(International Olympic Committee, 2007: p.6)

Whereas the second, third and fourth aim fit into the discussion above on the YOG as an event for privileged athletes, the first objective was addressed by SYOGOC through the CEP. It can be argued that the IOC has reacted to the recommendation by Wassong (2006) who argues that there should be an enhanced focus on the education of the athletes at events. Not only was the CEP aiming to encourage the cultural exchange between the athletes but also to convey the importance of the Olympic values: “[The CEP] aims to introduce young athletes to Olympism and the Olympic values in a fun and festive spirit, and to raise awareness on important issues such as the benefits of a healthy lifestyle, the fight against doping, and their role as sport ambassadors in their communities” (International Olympic Committee, 2009a: p.2). This has been perceived in the same way by the participating athletes who argued that the CEP was predominantly about

informing them about Olympic values. When questioned about the intentions behind the CEP, Subject F argued that *“ja gerade ich sag mal, dass wir mit Fairplay und die ganzen, mit den olympischen Werten aufwachsen (yes I would say, that we grow up with fair play and all those, with the Olympic values)”*. The fact that the athletes had to stay in the YOY for the whole two weeks of the event certainly supported the initiatives of the CEP as the athletes confirmed during the interviews. It gave the athletes the possibility to spend time in the village and to take part at different programmes: *“Wir waren dann ja auch ein bisschen mehr als zwei Wochen ja da. Dann hatte man auch Zeit noch was drumrum zu sehen und zu machen und nicht nur den Wettkampf zu haben. (We were there for a bit more than two weeks in the end. So we had the time to have a look at other things around, to do something and not only to have the competition”* (Subject H). Consequently, Wassong’s (2006) concern that there is not enough time for educational programmes to be implemented because of time-consuming competitions and training regimes was addressed through the compulsory stay in Singapore for two weeks. Nevertheless one has to say that some of the athletes still did not get enough opportunities to take part in the activities because of their tight competition schedule or other responsibilities. For example, Subject E complained that he and other competitors, *“wir konnten nicht direkt an diesen Angeboten teilnehmen. Wir hatten vor an einem Island Adventure teilzunehmen. Mussten dann aber leider an diesem Tag noch trainieren (we could not directly take part in these programmes. We wanted to take part in an Island Adventure. But then we had to practice on that day)”*. This clearly shows that for some athletes possibilities were limited although the facilities to take part were available, also experienced by

Subject F, who did not take part in any activities: *“Nein, da habe ich nicht teilgenommen. Also wir wollten eigentlich noch an einem Island Adventure teilnehmen. Aber da hatten wir dann ein Fernseh-Interview und dann mussten wir das absagen. (No, I did not take part in it. We actually wanted to take part in an Island Adventure. But then we had a TV interview and so we had to cancel it)”*.

Despite the educational focus which the YOG adopted through the CEP it is nevertheless important to address the contents and the success of the programme with the help of the athletes' perceptions. The IOC claims that the CEP was very successful and the “activities were extremely popular with the athletes” (International Olympic Committee, 2010c: p.1). Furthermore the *Durban Declaration* which was compiled at the 7th World Conference on Sport, Education and Culture after the YOG, states that the cultural and educational aspects of the YOG had a positive impact on the participants and that “the participants were motivated by the programme of the Games, and their aim of breaking down barriers between nationalities and cultures was achieved” (International Olympic Committee, 2010a: p.2). However, the IOC does not give any indication for the measurements of the positive feedback from the athletes. Furthermore it results from the data gained throughout this research project that the athletes did not perceive the contents of the CEP in a very positive way. In this context, it is important to differentiate between perceptions of the CEP as an initiative which had the proposed educational aim and the real experience by the athletes according to Tomlinson's (2002) theory of the spectacle and, of course, according to the methodological approach applied within the project, the focus on the athletes.

It evolves quite clearly from the conversations with the German athletes that they had problems with the contents of the CEP. This was particularly due to the fact that they perceived the activities as inappropriate for their particular age. For example, in contrast to the SYOGOC's claim that the World Cultural Village gave the participants the "chance to explore different cultures" (SYOGOC, 2010c: p.5), the athletes found the booths in which the different countries were represented as rather uninformative. Subject H described the activities as "*die haben dann eher so kleine Spielchen angeboten oder man konnte sich fotografieren lassen. Das war eher so zur Unterhaltung würde ich sagen* (they rather offered little games or there was the possibility to get your picture taken. That was rather for entertainment, I would say)", just to conclude that "also wenn ich ehrlich bin, ich habe jetzt nicht wirklich viel daraus gelernt (so when I'm honest, I did not really learn a lot there)". Similarly, Subject E described the activities as almost 'childish' and certainly not appropriate for himself:

Fand ich jetzt, hat mich persönlich jetzt nicht so interessiert weils keine tiefgründige Begegnung mit anderen Kulturen in den Zelten war sondern sehr oberflächlich muss man sagen. Das weiß man dann ja auch irgendwann selber schon, also ... das in Afrika, das es da Elefanten gibt und so. Das weiß man ja. (I was personally not very interested in these because it was not a profound encounter with other cultures but rather superficial, one has to say. You know that in advance anyway, I mean... that in Africa, there are elephants. You know that.)

Therefore it can be said that the IOC's claim that the CEP gained a lot interest amongst and successfully educated the participants has to be seen from a more critical perspective. Rather than being mentally stimulated and encouraged to become more interested in other cultures, the athletes experienced the activities as

either purely entertainment because “*wir hätten jetzt ja auch nicht den ganzen Tag in der Stadt rumlaufen können* (we could not have walked around in the city all day)” (Subject B), “*problematisch* (problematic)” (Subject E) or it “*war nicht irgendwas Neues* (was not something new)” (Subject H). Despite the focus on education, not all athletes’ needs and educational backgrounds have been met through the CEP. The fact that the athletes took part in the events is therefore rather due to the above discussed compulsory stay at the YOY for two weeks than because the athletes were interested in the activities. Thus, the long stay in Singapore enhanced the possibilities to take part in the CEP but it also misled the IOC to claim that the participants enjoyed the activities which did not correlate to the findings of this research project. In light of this, the athletes’ statements also become important if compared to the IOC’s aim to educate the young athletes so they can become ambassadors within their communities. Rogge claims that the IOC wants the participants to “be active in their communities” (Rogge, 2010: p. 33). However, none of the interviewed athletes made any comments regarding their role after the event or was even aware of it. Rather, when asked about any reworking of the YOG in general or the CEP in particular after their return to Germany, the athletes reassured the researcher that it was a return for them to their normal life: “*Es war dann einfach vorbei. Es wurde jeder vom Flughafen abgeholt und das wars* (It was simply over. Everybody got picked up from the airport and that was it)” (Subject A). Therefore one has to question the IOC’s claim that after the Games the participants acted as communicators of the Olympic values within their sporting and learning environment as they were not specifically directed to do so.

Nevertheless, there were certain aspects of the CEP which were perceived in a very positive manner by the interviewed participants. The IOC argues that “one of the most well-received CEP events were the ‘Chat With Champions’ sessions featuring Olympic champion pole vaulters Sergey Bubka and Yelena Isinbayeva, who were a source of inspiration to the young athletes during a lively and often amusing question-and-answer period” (International Olympic Committee, 2010c: p.1) and the results from the interviews with the athletes confirmed that they learned the most from the ‘Chat With Champions’ sessions. For the athletes it was particularly impressive that as well as Bubka and Isinbayeva Russian swimmer Alexander Popov also communicated to them “*diese Botschaft das Sport nicht alles ist* (this message that sport is not everything)” (Subject G). The athletes took on board this message which was closely connected to the importance of education for young athletes. All interviewed athletes who took part in one of the sessions made reference to these aspects, all of them similar to Subject G: “*Weil die eben auch gesagt haben, dass Sport irgendwann vorbei ist und man dann eben sein Leben trotzdem weiterleben muss* (Because they also said that your sporting career will be over one day but you will have to continue living your life)”. Consequently the ‘Chat with Champions’ sessions, in a way, fulfilled the role asked for by researchers Aquilina (2009), Henry (2010) and Giulianotti (2004) who argue that education has to play a more important role within an athlete’s career. It seems that the athletes realized that “*muss man halt schon eine gute schulische Ausbildung zu haben um dann weiterzumachen* (you really need a good school education in order to continue)” (Subject B) and they claimed that this was one of the most profound experiences they gained from the YOG. However, it is important to note that they

got this perception from former and current elite athletes rather than other CEP activities. The 'Champions' thus fulfil their task of being a role model for the young athletes as envisaged already by Pierre de Coubertin (Wassong, 2009) and the experiences of the athletes clearly outline the importance of this role.

Similar to the 'Chat with Champions' sessions, the athletes also praised the newly invented mixed-gender and mixed-NOCs events although only two of the interviewed athletes took part in these events. Subject F, who competed in a mixed team event which involved both genders and mixed nationalities, experienced the competition as something very "*Besonderes (special)*". She argued that:

Es war eine ganze neue Erfahrung und also ja es hat auch echt einen guten Zusammenhalt gegeben. Dass man eben mit anderen Nationen genauso ein Team sein kann wie jetzt nur Deutsche. Das war echt ganz super! (It was a totally new experience and yes, it really created a very good bond. That you can be a team with other nations the same as if there would only be Germans. That was really great!)

Therefore the IOC's aim to create a cultural exchange through the YOG seems to be partly fulfilled through these newly invented competition formats and even the interviews with the athletes that did not participate in the new event reveal the positive effects. For example, Subject G said that "*Aber ich kann mir das schon so als interessant vorstellen weil es dann natürlich auch irgendwie so eine internationale Gemeinschaft gründet, so in der Art.* (But I can imagine it to be very interesting because it obviously creates an international community, something like that)". It is interesting, however, that SYOGOC and the IOC rarely relate to these events within the policy documents. For example, the brochure *1st Summer Youth Olympic Games in 2010*, released by the IOC in 2007 to inform about the event does not

make any reference to the mixed events. Within the documents, the IOC informs about the events but despite recognizing that “it proved particularly popular with the athletes” (International Olympic Committee, 2010d: p.34) after the events there is no evaluation of the specific experiences of the athletes during the newly introduced events. However, the mixed events seem to have been one of the most important tool at the YOG to address the uneasy and contradictory relationship of “practical aspects of Olympism as it relates to Olympic education” (Reppold-Filho, 2009: p.1). Müller (2004) argues that internationalism is one of the most important aspects of Olympic Education which can help “to assist and promote internationally sporting contacts and personal contacts between individuals” (p.13) and the mixed-gender and mixed-NOCs events seemed to have created these international bonds.

Therefore in summary, despite the IOC’s and SYOGOC’s claims that the CEP involved the main educational objectives throughout the staging of the YOG, the athletes have experienced the educational aspects of event in a different way. The educational intentions were put into practice in Singapore but the athletes’ interviews revealed that they did not learn a lot through the CEP. Rather they perceived the activities as childish, for entertainment reasons and ‘nothing new’. In contrast to this stands the IOC summary that the CEP was very successful and the athletes enjoyed taking part in the activities. Nevertheless, the ‘Chat with Champions’ sessions were received favourably by the participating athletes and the importance of education throughout a high-performance career was emphasized. In this respect the YOG have to be seen in a positive light as Olympic researchers as well as academics concerned with athlete’s education increasingly

highlighted this matter within the last decade.

5.4 'Unplanned' experiences at the Youth Olympic Games

Finally, it is important to discuss those experiences of the participating athletes which are not related to the CEP and the YOG as a high-performance event. This is important in order to understand the staging of the YOG and the IOC's justification for the introduction of the event. Despite the negativity with which the athletes commented on the CEP, they enjoyed their stay in Singapore. Both, Subject D (*"Dieses Beisammensein war schon toll (The togetherness was amazing indeed)"*) and Subject G (*"Aber es herrschte so was ganz Besonderes und das fand ich schon toll (But there was something very special about it and I really found that amazing)"*) enjoyed the life within the Olympic village very much despite not being able to specifically describe the atmosphere that they had experienced. Subject H remembered playing pool with some Spanish people as one of the experiences she made with athletes from other nations. Furthermore she mentions the exchange of badges as an important part of the international community throughout the YOG:

Aber es gab halt auch noch so Räume wo man Billard spielen konnte zum Beispiel und da haben wir auch einmal mit Spaniern zusammen gespielt. Das fand ich ganz schön. Und man hat halt untereinander immer diese Anstecknadeln getauscht, die jedes Land halt hatte. Und da ist man auch so in Kontakt gekommen. (But there were also some rooms in which you could play pool and once we played there together with some Spanish athletes. I really enjoyed that. And we also exchanged badges with others because every country had some. This way we also got in touch with them.)

However, just as Subject H records, despite the efforts of the CEP to educate the athletes about other cultures, it was the unplanned activities and the unguided meetings between the athletes that shaped their international experience at the Games. Subject F realized that the life in the Olympic village shows “*wie einfach so Verständigung zwischen verschiedenen Kulturen und Völkern sein kann* (how simple international understanding between cultures and peoples can be)”. In addition, the athletes also acknowledged the communication and togetherness they experienced within the German team. In contrast to the IOC’s claim that the cultural exchange was achieved mainly through the CEP, it was rather perceived as an opportunity given through the staging of the YOG itself. The athletes stated that taking part at the event gave them the possibility to learn more about the other cultures because of the presence of athletes from other countries and continents. Therefore it can be argued that there was a large degree of learning outcome and insights into the Olympic Movement in general and Olympic Education in particular. If Müller (2004) argues that at events of the Olympic Movement “people of all nations come together, some as competitors and others as spectators, in the utmost spirit of friendship. Through the media, the Olympic family at the venue of the Games becomes the symbol of the Olympic concept of universalism” (p.14), the athletes confirmed in the interviews that they experienced this internationalism at the YOG. Subject G summarized that

ich fand eigentlich die ganze internationale Stimmung die da überall herrschte, also ich finde das schwer diese Stimmung zu beschreiben. Aber es herrschte so was ganz Besonderes und das fand ich wirklich toll. (I actually found that the whole international atmosphere which was present everywhere, I find it really difficult to describe this atmosphere. But there was something very special and I really enjoyed that.)

The IOC's and in particular Jacques Rogge's aim that the young athletes would "learn about the Olympic values and importantly [make] friendship with people from different cultures from around the world" (Rogge, 2010: p.34) through the CEP was thus fulfilled by the athletes. However the interviews with the athletes reveal that these objectives were reached simply through being at the YOG rather than through the activities of the CEP. It was the Olympic feeling that impressed them and enabled them to take part in the cultural exchange.

To draw a conclusion of the discussion and address the research questions, one has to say that there is a major difference between claims made by the IOC and the experiences of the athletes interviewed for this study. First of all, despite the IOC's aim to increase sporting participation and inspire the youth of the world to take part in sporting activities, it seems to have staged a high-performance event for only a few privileged athletes. This had already been criticized in advance by researchers and IOC members, and the athletes confirmed this impression by outlining, for example, the difficult qualification process. Furthermore the IOC claimed that the YOG are a platform for the very best athletes to show their "sporting excellence" and that they are the highlight for the athletes to take part despite the athletes stating that the competitions in Singapore were not their main important sporting events of the year. This discrepancy between the IOC and the athletes becomes even more obvious when discussing the educational aspects of the YOG. Whereas the IOC praised the CEP and its effects on the athletes, the results from the interviews question the IOC's aim and perceived success. With the

exception of the 'Chat with Champions' sessions, the athletes reported in a rather negative way about the educational activities. They thought that the World Cultural Village in which learning activities were offered did not fit their particular age group and their importance were exaggerated. However, rather than the CEP, the athletes enjoyed the unplanned encounter with other athletes within the YOV the most. Thus it seems that the athletes did take part in the learning process of Olympic Education, however, this process was more or less unintentional – for both the athletes and the IOC.

In addition, the discussion has also shown the importance of qualitative research with a focus on the participating athletes when it comes to the analysis of mega-events. The hermeneutical analysis helped to create the above discussed findings and without a centering of the athletes, results would have been very different. Only through centering the athletes within the research process, their experiences could be put in contrast to the policy documents. In contrast to other studies on sporting events in which "human agency is robbed of the range of its potential expression" (Tomlinson, 2002: p.56), their experiences are giving priority within this research. This has enabled the researcher to argue that there is a discrepancy between the IOC's position and the real experiences in Singapore. In this way, the experiences of the athletes did not only help to understand as Mason (2002) put it how "people talk through specific experiences in their lives" (p.64) but in addition, how they differ from the IOC's perspective. Therefore they provided an exploratory basis to consider the YOG from a subject-centred perspective and enabled the application of the hermeneutic circle to make bolder

claims about the event. The in-depth interviews enables to learn more about the athletes' perceptions than purely quantitative interviews would have been able to achieve. This is the reason for the difference between the IOC's claims which are predominantly based on facts and figures and the results of this study. Within the hermeneutical analysis it is important to move from the whole to the specific and reverse in order to understand and interpret the analysed topic. This means that the constant comparison between the policy documents and the interviews has allowed making bigger claims about the IOC policy through the hermeneutic circle. Through analyzing the experience using Hermeneutics, more knowledge about the athletes' perceptions could be gained. In this way the depth hermeneutics of the small number of eight interviews has contributed to the higher discussion on the CEP and the IOC policy despite only being a very small percentage of the athletes of only one country that participated in Singapore. Thus, the depth hermeneutic approach was applied to the documents and the interviews in order to facilitate an integrated approach to the understanding and interpretation of the YOG across the different levels of analysis and consequently from different perspectives.

6. Conclusions

This paper concludes with reference to the original research objectives and summarizing the main findings from the research process whilst at the same time offering a recommendation to the IOC to listen to the athletes' experiences in order to evaluate the inaugural Youth Olympic Games in a more effective way. The detailed review of the literature has laid the foundations by analyzing the main factors involving Olympic mega-events, Olympism and education for young athletes. Researchers argue that the Olympic Movement is in need of a more directed educational approach towards athletes and the IOC responded with the implementation of the YOG and its proclaimed emphasis on culture and education through the CEP. Through the emphasis on the participants of the YOG this paper has also fulfilled the aim of examining the perception of the athletes as their experiences provide a different perspective and enable the researcher to gain an insight of what goes on behind the spectacle (Tomlinson, 2002). This has been achieved through analyzing the relevant literature but also through interviews with eight German participants of the YOG.

Interviewing athletes and talking about their experiences has established an understanding of their perspectives on the YOG as a high-performance event, its educational value and additional gains for the athletes through their time spent at Singapore. It has been argued in the methodology section of this paper that the framework based on a Foucauldian approach constitutes different discourses on the YOG and helps to identify the construction and production of meanings around

the event by the IOC and the participants. The results of the study show that this centering of the agents within a hermeneutic process along with the use of CDA enabled to construct a more relevant image of the YOG, disputing many objectives and claims of the IOC. The application of the hermeneutical circle with interpretations and understandings of IOC policy documents and the subjects' points of views and reverse contributed to the deconstruction of the YOG. The use of Thompson's (1990) depth-hermeneutic as a methodological tool has proved to be very valuable because the experiences of the athletes and their meanings could be analyzed in more detail.

It has also emerged from the discussion that successfully applying the theoretical framework of a Foucauldian approach has enabled the researcher to arrive at the point of contrasting the IOC policy documents and the perceptions of the participants in the first place. The discussion reveals that the IOC did indeed produce technologies of power through creating the CEP and expected certain effects concerning the education of the young elite athletes. This can be seen at the descriptions of the individual activities but also at the more general policy documents. However, what is even more relevant concerning Foucault's theory, is, that the athletes also perceived certain values at the YOG through which they should learn how to behave, live and participate at Olympic events. Thus, a technology of the self was created at the YOG, too. The fact that this was experienced and voiced by the athletes themselves, confirms the assumption that at the YOG the athletes went through the "slow formation of self experience; how we begin to understand ourselves as subjects within power relations" (Markula & Pringle, 2006: p.139). This has clearly taken place at the YOG. Through the

emphasized focus on the subject within the research project by combining Foucault and Gramsci's concept of hegemony, the contrast within the interrelation of technologies of power and technologies of the self – "governmentality" – was made very obvious. The different perspectives reveal that if individuals are given a voice in order to defend themselves against the control mechanisms of the state and other institutions such as the IOC (Hargreaves, 1986), statements such as those made by the IOC about the YOG, might have to be reconsidered. With Digel (2010a) arguing that "educational programmes should primarily be oriented towards the athlete whose Olympic education needs to be enhanced and improved if Olympism is to be preserved as an effective technology" (p.2671), the methodological tools could also be very valuable for Olympic researchers' concern towards an Olympic education aimed at the athlete.

The major findings of this paper are that there are fundamental differences between the experiences of the athletes at the YOG and the IOC's and SYOGOC's presentation of the event, especially concerning the educational value of the CEP. Whereas the organisations claim that the content of the CEP at Singapore was very successful and enhanced the educational experience of the athletes, the subjects of this study were very unsatisfied with the programme. Thus, their perceptions helped to deconstruct the political claims in a very valuable way. These results are significant for the IOC and future Organising Committees of YOG as they reveal that the effects of the CEP are exaggerated and too illusionary. It is recommended that the IOC responds to the dissatisfying contents of the CEP with new concepts, much more adapted to the needs and wishes of the athletes. A far more coordinated and effective response could be reached through the cooperation with other agencies

that have more experience with the education of young people in general and young elite athletes in particular.

Nevertheless the study has also shown that the athletes had some very useful experiences during their time in Singapore, which they related to their own initiatives rather than to the CEP. The international character of the event was particularly impressive for the athletes and the cultural exchange took place within the YOY, mainly without the support of the CEP. Therefore the vision envisaged by Pierre de Coubertin of educating young athletes about “that very internationalism which, these days, is the best, or rather the only guarantee of the survival of the movement for athletic renewal that is so necessary for the health of modern societies” (Coubertin, 1922/2001: p.204) was created at the YOG. However, this took place subconsciously rather than through the efforts made by SYOGOC and the IOC through the installment of the CEP although it is very likely that the CEP has enhanced these experiences. One can argue that this is largely due to the fact that the athletes had to stay within the YOY for the whole two weeks of the competition and this is an important outcome for the IOC. In his keynote speech at the plenary session of the Olympic Congress in Copenhagen, Frankie Fredericks addressed the significance of the athletes being in the Olympic Village: “In 1996, the biggest mistake I made was to go and stay in a hotel. Winning became more important than the other values. I personally think and belief that all athletes should stay in the Olympic Village” (Fredericks, 2009: p.6). The results of this study emphasize the importance of the Olympic Village experience and when Torres (2009) states that “it is important to ask whether there is something to carry over from the YOG to the Olympic Games”, the answer might well be the compulsory

stay in the village in order to experience the Olympic spirit and the internationalism present at the event.

Whilst this study has offered an analysis of the situation as played out by members of the German team, research on the event would be greatly enhanced by further investigation of the experiences of athletes from other countries and in particular other continents. As Aquilina (2009) outlines, there are major differences between the educational backgrounds of elite athletes due to different education systems and the facilities available in specific countries and therefore a comparison would be very useful. The interpretive nature of this study using a hermeneutical analysis of policy documents and interviews has limited its ability to discuss other cases in the given time frame but has proved to be extremely valuable. Consequently it is an avenue of investigation that should be followed as a means to further build upon the academic framework that this paper has put forward. There is also potential to follow a quantitative methodology that would allow surveying athletes on a larger scale. This could be done at the inaugural 2012 Winter Youth Olympic in Innsbruck, Austria. However, this would not embrace the sense of experiences and feelings of the athletes which has been demonstrated by this research and has been the strength of this study.

(16.331 words)

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