From Rhetoric to Action—Employing Olympism as an Educational Tool: *An examination and evaluation of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games*

by

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Abstract

This thesis examines the school-based Olympic education (OE) programs implemented in the Beijing Olympic Games from both top-down and bottom-up perspectives. The research employs a three-pronged methodology for data collection, using textual analysis, semi-structured interviews with five key informants, and storytelling with six student participants. Findings suggest that OE in China was primarily government-led, with BOCOG, academic experts and numerous volunteers providing expertise and assistance. The students’ narratives shed light on how OE was conceptualized and experienced by its recipients as well as the useful role it served in revitalizing the traditional education system. To strengthen OE during future Games, the thesis recommends that future organizers and host governments embed programs of OE in the ongoing state school systems, set clear
learning objectives in advance and monitor and evaluate implementation continually. It also recommends that future researchers continue this students’ focus on the student voice.
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Chapter 1

Introduction

The Frenchman Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937), recognized as the father of the modern Olympic Movement, is noted in his biography by the International Pierre de Coubertin Committee as an educator, a historian, a writer, a sport facilitator, an Olympian, a humanist and a social organizer. However, he saw himself first and foremost as an educator (Müller, 2009); Coubertin’s initial goal was to employ a system of competitive sports to propel educational reform in response to the deep-rooted political and social crises in his native France (Kidd, 1996; MacAlloon, 1981; Weber, 1970). Therefore, the revival of the modern Olympic Games in the 19th century began as an element of educational reform.

The original Olympic Charter (1896) claims four aims for the modern Olympic Games to achieve, three of which can be classified as educational aims:

1. to promote the development of those physical and moral qualities which are the basis of sport;
2. to educate young people through sport in a spirit of better understanding between each other and of friendship, thereby helping to build a better and more peaceful world;
3. to spread the Olympic principles throughout the world, thereby creating international goodwill (Olympic Charter, 1896, as cited in Binder, 2000b).

In this sense, the modern Olympic Movement cannot simply be seen as a system of various sporting events, but rather as a broadly educational and developmental project on the global scale. It is Coubertin’s initial proposal and the protocols in the Olympic Charter that depict the birth of what we call Olympic education (OE) today. Generally, OE is the educational
mandate of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), which refers to Olympic-related educational programs conducted by various institutions during each Olympic period. OE has been conducted by the IOC, the International Olympic Academy (IOA), National Olympic Academies (NOAs)\(^1\), Olympic study centers and institutes of higher education, as well as by the organizing committees of Olympic and Winter Olympic Games (Naul, 2008).

The primary goal of OE is to use sport and physical activity as a driving force to promote the harmonious development of people, with a view to encouraging the establishment of a peaceful society concerned with preservation of mutual understanding and human dignity (Arnold, 1996; Binder, 2000c; Kidd, 1996; Müller, 2000).

There is no single, unified definition of OE; generally speaking, scholars have examined two broad categories of learning: the experiential learning-by-doing of participating in sport in an Olympic context, and the formal learning about the Olympic Movement, its values and programs within the context of an institutional program. In the first category, Naul (2008) refers to OE as a pentahedron consisting of the spirit of Pierre de Coubertin, a cultural task for school sports, didactic objective for physical education, value education for everyday life, and Olympic learning within social milieus. In the second use of the term, Ren (2009) refers to OE as an educational activity that carried out during the Olympic period, takes youth as its main target group, and uses sports to disseminate the Olympic values.

My interest in OE stems from multiple sources. First, my involvement from 2007 to 2009 as a member of the Beijing grass-roots OE Promoting team which was dedicated to implementing and promoting OE in primary and secondary schools greatly impressed me and instilled a passion for employing Olympism as an educational tool in schools. Second, my undergraduate study at the Capital University of Physical Education and Sports, Beijing, China, gave me a solid interdisciplinary knowledge background in journalism, education and

\(^1\) Right now, approximately 140 NOAs have been established globally, approved by the IOC and IOA to conduct Olympic education programs in their countries. The NOAs are responsible to take the lead and carry out Olympic-related educational and cultural activities, such as exhibitions, events, workshops and sports games, that promote the value of Olympism. They are also expected to work closely with the national education authorities and educational institutions at all levels.
sports sociology, and offered me the opportunity to work as a volunteer for the Beijing Olympic Games, an interpreter for Olympic-related conferences, and an intern reporter for many national and international sports competitions. Last, my participation in the 18th Postgraduate Seminar at the IOA, Olympia, Greece, not only provided me with up-to-date knowledge in Olympic studies, numerous inspiring discussions and some lifelong friends; this rewarding experience also refueled my enthusiasm for the Olympic Games and OE.

1.1 Purpose of Study

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Olympism has been employed as an educational tool in the broader context of the modern Olympic Movement, with a specific focus on the school-based OE programs implemented in conjunction with the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games. I aim to identify how the educational mandate of Olympism was interpreted, implemented and supported by the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIXth Olympiad (BOCOG) and the Chinese government by examining the OE programs conducted in local elementary and secondary schools. Moreover, I will evaluate the effect of the school-based OE programs both from top-down (i.e., how did BOCOG fulfill the educational mandate of hosting the Olympic Games in local schools) and bottom-up (i.e., what were the students’ experiences in those OE programs and what kind of impact did OE generate on them) perspectives.

1.2 The Research Questions

I have specifically explored the following questions:

1) What were the prime motives and key imperatives of BOCOG and the Chinese
government when planning OE programs? What kind of educational outcomes did China want to achieve through conducting those programs?

2) How did the OE programs integrate with the Chinese educational and social contexts? How were the educational and cultural programs conducted in local primary and secondary schools?

3) What were the students’ experiences of the OE programs? What did they want to achieve through participating in the program?

4) What kind of legacies has OE left for China, and what kinds of impact have OE programs made upon the children and youth who received it?

1.3 Implications of Proposed Research

This study aims to present some substantive reflections, both in theory and practice, in the OE field. I hope the findings could, in some small way, contribute to the conceptualization of OE and the understanding of the way in which Olympism has been employed as an educational tool on a domestic level.

The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games drew worldwide attention since the Games were staged in the world’s most populous country with quite unique political, social and cultural backgrounds. It is claimed in the official *Beijing Olympic Education Report* that the city fulfilled its promise in the bidding contract by spreading Olympic ideals to 400 million Chinese children and youth, and conducting the largest scale OE campaign in modern Olympic history. However, this number does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that OE successfully attained its ultimate educational tasks. This research is conducted to fill the gap in previous literature regarding critical analysis and legitimate evaluation of Beijing’s OE programs. Moreover, since the ideology of Olympism originally came from the West, there has been much speculation with respect to what kind of influence that the Olympic Games and OE generated on Chinese society and particularly Chinese children. As a researcher who
was born and raised in China and has been recently educated in a Western country, I conduct this research from a unique perspective and provide an objective answer to the above question by critically analyzing my qualitative findings. I will give priority to the real participants of Beijing’s OE programs—the students—and focus on their needs and experiences, which have also rarely been addressed in previous literature.

Finally, this research project is committed to shedding light on the development of OE in both theoretical and organizational frameworks. Ren (2009) points out that the dissemination of Olympism has transformed from a one-way flow (from the West to the non-West, from the developed nations to the underdeveloped regions) to an interactive two-way communication. Particularly, he argues:

> those nations and territories currently in a state of social transition are regions where various cultural differences are constantly colliding and interacting which can bring new thinking and new content to Olympic education. (2009, pp. 50-51)

I identify China as one of those nations and am passionate to discover what the “new thinking” and “new content” are. By doing this, I hope my research findings could present some valuable resources for administrators in sports federations and future Olympic host cities, as well as school authorities and education practitioners.
Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Within the growing body of scholarship on the modern Olympic Movement, however, less attention has been paid to OE. In contrast, this literature review will thoroughly examine the history, aspiration, and practical development of OE.

This section will begin with a two-fold review of the educational ideals of the modern Olympic Movement, consisting of the historical development and the contemporary aspirations of Olympism. First, I will trace its educational origin by identifying three major figures—Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths, Thomas Arnold, and Pierre de Coubertin. Works and values of the first two people are believed to have significantly influenced Coubertin’s Olympic proposal. This is followed by a detailed discussion of the current aspirations of OE, addressing the scholarly dialogues carried out among Olympic experts and educators from a broad range of social and cultural backgrounds, and then presenting a CPLC analysis (contents, pedagogies, learners and context) to scrutinize various aspects of OE. I will then present a brief historical review of OE practices in four previous Olympic host cities (Montreal, Calgary, Nagano and Sydney) to examine how the values of Olympism have been transmitted into real educational practices.

2.1 A Retrospective Review of the Educational Origin of Olympism

Although the term “Olympic education” only appeared within contemporary research and scholarly works in the past few decades, the Olympic Movement’s commitment to education stems from its founder. Likewise, it was not Coubertin who initiated the linkage between sports and educational purposes. The original educational roots within sports and physical activities in Europe can be traced back to more than 100 years before Coubertin proposed
re-building the modern Olympic cycle. However, these early educational clues, although highly important in understanding the value of OE, have rarely been discussed within current Olympic-related literature. The following part of this section will scrutinize these educational origins by identifying two major figures within the process of Coubertin’s forming of his Olympic educational ideology.

2.1.1 Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths (1759-1839)

Johann Christoph Friedrich GutsMuths is known as a teacher, an educator, and most importantly, a practitioner of physical education in Germany. According to Goodbody (1982), GutsMuths started teaching in his mid twenties in a philanthropic boarding school at Dessau, Germany, where he taught geography, technology, gymnastics and swimming. His most renowned contribution was to introduce systematic physical exercises into the school curriculum to improve the health conditions of schoolchildren in the Germanic region of Europe. Also, Naul (2008) points out that GutsMuths suggested three pedagogical exercises, including gymnastic exercises, handicrafts, and social youth games, to distinguish the physical motions involved in labor work and physical activities, and further demonstrated a system to classify sports and games.

The question remains, why is GutsMuths’s promotion of physical exercises important to study OE, and how can we precisely understand his pedagogical concerns of physical education within the context of the theoretical foundation of OE? GutsMuths offered us the answer to the above questions in his own writings. He published the very first textbook on teaching gymnastics *Gymnastik für die Jugend* (in German) in 1793, and seven years later, his systematic works on physical education were translated into English and published as *Gymnastics for youth: or A practical guide to healthful and amusing exercises for the use of schools*. In the second chapter of his book, GutsMuths (1800) analyzes the dialectical relationship between training the body and nurturing the mind by noticing that “cultivation
of the mind alone is destructive to the body and... cultivation of the body alone makes the mind rude” (p.130). He criticized the European school education for placing more emphasis on the cultivation of intellectual culture alone, while almost entirely neglecting physical education. He argued that intellectual advancements were achieved at the cost of sacrificing people’s health and strength, which would eventually lead to “weak and diseased minds through the reaction of bodily infirmity” (GutsMuths, 1800, p.131). Therefore, GutsMuths supported the unified development of body and mind as a balanced whole, aiming to establish a more fervent harmony and ultimately achieve the perfection of mankind, in which body and mind are both “equally found, equally energetic, and derive pleasure, not pain, from their connexion” (GutsMuths, 1800, p.132).

GutsMuths was also known for developing the basic principles for artistic gymnastics (Goodbody, 1982), which he argued can be ideally achieved through the pedagogical concept to “affect the body directly, and only indirectly the mind” (GutsMuths, 1800, p.84). GutsMuths (1800) also believed that through systematic physical exercises and training, young people could obtain numerous attributes, such as health, strength, agility, stamina, courage and presence of mind, which would contribute, either explicitly or implicitly, to the development of a perfect “manly character” (p.63). In this sense, we can conclude that physical perfection constituted a leading principle within GutsMuths’s educational ideology and was considered indispensable for comprehensive human development. Moreover, it is recorded that GutsMuths’s idea of physical education and his pedagogical concepts spread quickly across the German states and were adopted by many countries in Europe such as Denmark, Sweden, France, Switzerland, Netherlands and Great Britain (Goodbody, 1982).

Likewise, it is noteworthy that Naul (2008), based on his understanding of GutsMuths, arrives at two conclusions. First, according to GutsMuths’s articulations on gymnastics, the interrelated logic between body and mind can be interpreted as follows: “The body is a part of the harmonious education of the individual..., so that the body obeys the mind and the individual carries out the moral behaviours that the mind commands (p.41). In other words,
physical education contributes indirectly to an individual’s character building. Second, GutsMuths’s application of Plato and Aristotle’s descriptions of gymnastics in Ancient Greece lays the theoretical foundation of his pedagogical gymnastics. While on one hand, it revitalizes the cultural and educational ideas of the Ancient Greeks, on the other hand, it foreshadows and explains the renaissance of Coubertin’s theory of “sporting education” almost 100 years later.

In summary, GutsMuths’s most renowned contributions rest in his advocacy of the unity of trained spirit and disciplined body, and his campaign of justifying the position of physical education, primarily gymnastics, in schools at his time. His practical efforts and pedagogical concepts prefigured and inspired Coubertin’s urge and outlook to establish an educational system in which “the physical counted above the intellectual” (Weber, 1970, p.6) in his native France. Notably, it is not precise to completely equate Coubertin’s fondness of sports with the German tradition of gymnastics, which ultimately aimed to develop corporate national identities by training and idealizing the physical skills of its people. In other words, the original intention of developing gymnastics was closely connected with the sense of German nationalism (Sosulski, 2007). On the other hand, Coubertin’s ideals to reform education and build the modern Olympics revolved around his passion for sports, team games and athletics, which encouraged young people to “exercise self-government, form their own groups and clubs, train themselves for free life by adherence to an order of their own making, and be obedient to self-imposed laws” (Weber, 1970, p.7).

2.1.2 Thomas Arnold (1795-1842)

Thomas Arnold was the legendary figure described in Tom Brown’s Schooldays by Thomas Hughes; he was the schoolmaster of the Rugby School when Hughes attended and appeared to be very influential in the author’s writings. Arnold has been described as an educator, a school reformer, a sport promoter (Naul, 2008; Stanley, 1844) and a theologian (Lucas,
According to his biographer and student Penrhyn Stanley (1844), Arnold was largely influenced by the German style of physical exercise with the help of his German proficiency and personal study trips to Germany before he took the headship at the British Rugby School. Arnold’s biggest contribution arguably lies in the fact that he propelled the education reform to include sports, team games in particular, such as cricket and rugby, into public school day-to-day life, aiming to assist the ethical and moral education and advocate the school system of self-government (Naul, 2008). However, the question remains, if Arnold was so heavily influenced by German gymnastics, how come he turned out to lean so heavily on sports and team games? Eric Dunning (1999) argues that Arnold’s efforts to develop the sport of rugby (e.g., the commitment to the written rules, pick up the ball and run, the imposition of strict regulations of the game) should be understood within the wider social background at the particular stage of industrialization, urbanization, civilization and state formation in Britain between the 1830s and 1850s. Arnold’s motivation was deeply rooted in, and intrinsically reflected from the political and economic context at his time, where the intensifying class conflicts between the landed classes and the rising bourgeoisies escalated, and resulted in Arnold’s shift of attention (Dunning, 1999).

Besides developing the physical games, Thomas Arnold is widely known for his advocacy to unite children’s physical development with training in social responsibility as well as moral behaviour. Arnold’s emphasis on moral integrity as an educational concern can be traced to his other status as an ordained priest of the Anglican Church (Stanley, 1844). Therefore, Arnold was also constantly depicted as a “muscular Christian” (Lucas, 1975), which Naul (2008) argues, to some extent, contributes to his twofold educational goals of “intellectual excellence” and “moral principles” (p.36), sports providing the means.

On the other hand, MacAloon (1981) warns us that Arnold has been idealized in Thomas Hughes’s work. As a matter of fact, his proper place in developing modern sports in Great Britain is situated mostly in his promotion of moral thinking rather than the physical values of sports per se; sports and physical education happened to function as an effective device in
achieving his aim of “making Christian gentlemen out of his beloved rugby boys” (Lucas, 1975, p.456). As a theologian, the ultimate goal for Arnold was to make the schoolchildren obedient to laws of God, to school, and to himself (Stanley, 1844), and in fact, he never over-emphasized the role that school sport plays in his educational reform (Briggs, 1975). Therefore, Thomas Hughes seems to consider the physical value of sports and games as a more important pedagogical means within the whole picture of education than his teacher and mentor does.

In the context of intellectual cultivation, Briggs (1975) notes that school education to Arnold is also more about establishing noble character than its strict intellectual function. According to Arnold, an ideal boy should be in this order, a Christian, a gentleman, and a well educated person (Briggs, 1975). Lucas (1975) interprets Arnold’s original writing of “On the discipline of public schools” (1835) this way: “The happiness of man… deals more with his intellect than with his physique, and yet more in his moral and religious excellence than in his intellectual” (p.457).

In this sense, Robinson (n.d.) echoes MacAloon’s argument and indicates that Coubertin had mistakenlty attributed to the idealized figure of Thomas Arnold in Thomas Hughes’s novel and exaggerated the inspirations he alleged Arnold had passed on to him to found the modern Olympic Games. Even though Thomas Arnold had very little to do with the sports development at the Rugby school, it was his contribution to the moral and religious progress as well as his overall proposal of using sport to propel educational reform that inspired Coubertin. Additionally, Arnold’s synthesis of morals, ethical principles and sports also resonates partly with the educational notions of OE, and it contributed significantly to what Coubertin later applied as “religio-athletae”.

2.1.3 Pierre de Coubertin (1863-1937)
For most people within the field of Olympic studies, the name Pierre de Coubertin will naturally accompany the image of father of the modern Olympic movement. This title has always been connected to the fact that Coubertin was the one who propelled the establishment of the IOC in 1894 and organized the very first international variant of modern Olympic Games in Athens, Greece, two years later. However, the formation of his inspiration and ideology to revitalize the ancient Greek ritual and sport festival within the historical context of his time is largely neglected. A consensus reached among sports and Olympic historians is that Coubertin’s proposal for the Games was framed from the urgent realization of the deep-rooted social, political and economic crises in his native France (Kidd, 1996; MacAloon, 1981; Parry, 1998.a; Wassong, 2006). Kidd (1996) in particular notes that Coubertin was concerned most about the social problems, such as class conflict, exploitation, poverty, disease and the potential likelihood of war, all of which resulted from the rapid growth of industrialization and urbanization. Further, he believed that educational reform could function as an effective means to solve those problems and “shake the country out of its lethargy” (Kidd, 1996, p.83). Despite the fact that Coubertin himself also received a traditional French education at the Jesuit school Saint-Ignace in his early life, which would tend to lead to law or the priesthood, he ended up becoming a progressive education reformer and an enthusiastic sports leader (Guttmann, 1992). Coubertin was a radical critic of the educational conditions of his time; he criticized the traditional education for its repressive teaching methods and overcrowded curriculum, and considered it “too weak to make significant contributions to the education of modern citizens” (Wassong, 2006, p. 220). Likewise, in his effort to seek ways to reform education, young Coubertin went on study trips to Germany, England, the United States (Naul, 2008; Müller, 1998, 2000, 2009; Parry, 1988; ) and Canada (Kidd, 1996) in the 1880s and 1890s. He visited many public schools, conducted discussions and exchanged views with local schoolmasters. Sports and physical games had become a distinctive feature in the British and American elite, male-only, private schools and universities as well as some state schools during that time (Naul, 2008). These examples contributed to Coubertin’s belief that amateur sport can be used as an educational means to strengthen a country’s national integrity and build up its international strength
(Wassong, 2005). Additionally, it is noted that the biographical novel by Thomas Hughes titled *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), based on his personal experience at the British Rugby School, also theoretically constituted the important role sports played within Coubertin’s educational thoughts (Kidd, 1996; MacAlloon, 1981; Naul, 2008).

Therefore, for Coubertin and those who helped him establish the modern Olympic cycle, the Olympics were a sports and culture based educational movement, through which young adults from all over the world gather together, with the ultimate goal to “enhance human development and generally make the world a better place” (Kidd, 1996, p.83). In his oft-quoted retrospective article “The philosophical principles of modern Olympism” (1935), Coubertin offers his basic interpretations of the nature of Olympism:

1. A religion of sport (the *religio athletae*);
2. An aristocracy, an elite (but egalitarian and meritocratic);
3. Chivalry (comradeship and rivalry - suspension of exclusively national sentiments);
4. Truce (the temporary cessation of quarrels, disputes and misunderstandings): “… to interrupt their struggles for a moment in order to celebrate loyal and courteous muscular Games.” (p.582);
5. Rhythm (the Olympiad) “the Olympic Games must be held on a strictly astronomical rhythm, because they are the quadrennial celebration of the human springtime, honoring the successive arrival of human generations” (p.581);
6. The young adult male individual;
7. Beauty - artistic and literary creation; and,
8. Peace, promoted by mutual respect based on mutual understanding.

Although some of Coubertin’s expressions seem tied to the ideals of his own time, his conceptions of Olympism are still considered as rudiments of current Olympic values. His values have been reflected in modern manifestations in the educational context and the
efforts to define Olympism by contemporary scholars. For example, Jim Parry (1998b) interprets Coubertin’s philosophy of Olympism to be focused on:

the interest of not just the elite athlete, but everyone; not just a short truce period, but the whole of life; not just competition and winning, but also the values of participation and co-operation; not just sport as an activity, but also as a formative and developmental influence contributing to desirable characteristics of individual personality and social life (p.154).

To be sure, Coubertin’s thoughts and ideologies are not perfect; sometimes his writings even incorporate self-contradictory notions. First, Coubertin, on one hand highly emphasized liberal humanistic qualities, such as fairness, justice and universalism; on the other hand, like many other 19th century liberals, he was only interested in extending those rights to a few. For example, Coubertin strongly opposed women’s participation in his revival of the modern Olympic Games. He (1935) wrote that:

I personally do not approve of the participation of women in public competitions, which is not to say that they must abstain from practising a great number of sports, provided they do not make a public spectacle of themselves. In the Olympic Games, as in the contests of former times, their primary role should be to crown the victors (p.583).

Second, Coubertin also intended to exclude working-class athletes in modern sports and his Games. He proposed an ambiguous and complex definition of amateurism to complicate the opportunity of working-class males by arguing that amateur athletes should not be paid for doing manual labors (Hill, 1996). Likewise, critics denounced Coubertin’s amateurism theory as a being vehicle to perpetuate inequalities and reinforce the status quo of social hierarchies (Hill, 1996; Toohey, 2007). Gruneau (1984) argued that amateurism in modern sport is an expression of class supremacy, which empowered the upper class with more control within athletic contests, and keeps the working class in its inferior place. However,
Coubertin’s supporters defend his notion of amateurism as being “unconscious of any class repressions” (Hill, 1996, p.7). I also would argue that this may partly derive from Coubertin’s aristocratic origin.

Finally, Coubertin’s preference of using sports as a driving force to propel educational and social change also appears to be a double-edged sword. Coubertin himself acknowledges that “athletics can bring into play both the noblest and the basest passions… they can be chivalrous or corrupt, virile or bestial; finally they can be used to strengthen peace or to prepare for war” (Coubertin, as cited in Toohey, 2007, p.39).

Likewise, Kidd (2009a) reminds us that “the modern Olympic Movement has always been society-specific, a product of its time” (p.2). Therefore, it is important to place Coubertin and trace his Olympic ideals in the historical, social and cultural circumstances in late 19th century Europe. In other words, the limitations and setbacks of his ideology could also reflect the concerns of his race and gender in his particular time. At the same time, what is noteworthy is that Coubertin’s elaborations of the Olympism ideology possess both universal values and contemporary meanings. His revitalization of the grand occasion—the modern Olympic Games—also has profound significance for our times. However, Müller (2009) warns us that since little has been done to revise the content of Olympism since Coubertin’s time, there is potential danger that those principles may be exaggerated without necessary adaptations to modern times. In this sense, it is critical to re-construct Coubertin’s ideologies of Olympism and understand the contingent nature of his project within modern contexts. In answering the question of what Olympism may come to mean in the current educational terms, I will elaborate its theoretical tasks in the following section, namely the contemporary aspirations of OE.

2.2 The Contemporary Aspirations of Olympic Education

1) Union of body and mind, meaning Olympic education should concern the entire human being and the harmonious development of body, spirit and will.

2) Striving for self-perfection, the ideal that encourages athletes to work as hard as they can and struggle for general self-improvement on whatever level.

3) Amateurism: Athletes should be free from avarice and materialism. This rule is still pedagogically important, especially where the influence of business and media has no limit and athletes become marketing objects and lose their personal freedom.

4) Rule of ethics: Fair play is the acknowledgement of rules in a social-ethical convention that makes competition in civilized form possible. Moral and fair strategies must be lived and internalized.

5) Peace: Coubertin was directly impressed by several wars and influenced by the peace activities of his time. Knowing and understanding other people should create acceptance and sport should become the “peace-meeting”.

6) Advancement of emancipation developments in and through sport, indicating that all games and all nations share equal rights for all disciplines. Sport is a meeting ground regardless of social position, possession or profession.
A large number of studies followed, written by sports and education scholars from a broad range of social and cultural backgrounds. Most researchers (Arnold, 1996; Binder, 2000b, 2000c, 2001, 2004; Geng, 2007; Grupe, 1996; Kidd, 1996; Pei, 2008; Ren, 2009) interpret the aspirations of OE based on the fundamental principles in the Olympic Charter, and elaborate on the aspirations from various perspectives. Commonly, they share the ideological consensus to stress the unity of body and mind, as well as the harmonious human development, with the same goals of promoting the common interests of humankind and society, such as peace, mutual understanding and friendship. They call for sports for all and emphasize participation in physical activities as a basic human right. Additionally, in their works, they espouse joint values, such as fair play, exceeding limits and striving for excellence. Most importantly, it is widely acknowledged that all of the humanistic values are carried out through the pedagogical method of sports and physical activities.

So what are the actual educational messages that OE aims to pass along? What is the ideological impetus that has pushed the modern Olympic Games to develop from a regional sports festival to a multidimensional and multidirectional global phenomenon? In order to provide comprehensive answers to these questions and fully understand the aspirations of OE, the following section will present a CPLC analysis (contents, pedagogies, learners and context) of OE. I will argue that OE must have both a traditional basis and an essential future mission to cultivate new generations with healthy bodies and international visions if these educational goals were to be actually achieved.

2.2.1 The Contents of Olympic Education

Speaking of the content of OE, that is, the actual educational messages that OE is tasked to convey, Olympic-related knowledge should first and foremost be addressed to lay theoretical foundations for Olympic learning on a more solid footing. Naul (2008) labels the teaching and learning activities of Olympic-related knowledge as the “knowledge-oriented” approach,
and characterizes it as an “international ‘hidden curriculum’” (p.118) within OE. He further explains that:

A “knowledge-oriented” approach, [is one] that seeks to explain the Olympic knowledge by means of its historical and educational legacy. This takes place in the forms of “knowledge transfer” and “knowledge processing”, using textbooks, readers, brochures, working materials and teachers’ notes. Children and young people should be given a national and international view of the ancient and modern Olympic Games in the form of names, dates and facts, in a manner appropriate to their age. This approach includes cultural topics, such as historical and present-day knowledge of the country or city that is to host the next Olympic Games. The course may equally involve digressions about the Olympic ideals, symbols and the festival culture of the Games. These contents supplement and complement the reproduction of the Olympic culture and history as a means of imparting the relevant information (p.118).

The “knowledge-oriented” educational approach is believed to have been most commonly adopted within contemporary OE practice. Most NOAs and organizing committees initiate their official Olympic educational programs by publishing booklets, brochures, study guides, toolkits, pamphlets and posters, etc, to spread the Olympic-related knowledge and implicitly address the potential values of Olympic ideas and spirit.

Nonetheless, it is highly questionable to reduce the contents of OE to making people aware of the Olympic history, tradition, knowledge, sports events and how they work. Parry (2003) argues that OE could have notable influences for the school curriculum on a much broader ground—cultivating students’ intelligence, character and personality as a whole. Binder (2000a, 2000b, 2000c, 2001; Binder & Guo, 2004) further observes that the core of OE should be value education, and she focuses on implementing OE into school programs in correspondence with a striving for achievement in physical training and daily life. Also, she
(2000, a) advocates that schools should develop value-related curricula to help enhance the OE and outlines five educational tasks:

1. Enrich the human personality through physical activity and sport, blended with culture, and understood as lifelong experience.

2. Develop a sense of human solidarity, tolerance and mutual respect associated with fair play.

3. Encourage peace, mutual understanding, respect for different cultures, protection of the environment, basic human values and concerns, according to regional and national requirements.

4. Encourage excellence and achievement in accordance with fundamental Olympic ideals.

5. Develop a sense of the continuity of human civilization as explored through ancient and modern Olympic history (p.36).

Notably, acquaintance of the Olympic knowledge alone cannot solely measure the educational outcomes of OE. However, Wassong (2006) argues that since the modern Olympic values are transmitted in the similar sense given by the Ancient Greeks, the teaching and spreading of Olympic-related knowledge should always be seen as a focal point among the various educational goals that OE aims to attain.

The abovementioned theoretical approaches aiming to diversify the contents of OE have inspired another round of scholarly discussion within Olympic studies. Accordingly, it naturally leads to the next question: how will it work? Just because OE espouses ideals, such as the well-rounded development of humans, the spirit of fair play and mutual understanding, does not mean these educational objectives would automatically be realized. So how will these educational tasks be attained, and how will the OE values be transmitted
into practice within the traditional school education for students to embrace and apply to other areas of their lives? Naul (2008) suggests that firstly, the Olympic values such as mutual respect and fair play creates a direct impact on students’ behaviours in the context of school sports. Second, current sport education in schools already incorporates multiple educational goals besides pursuing physical excellence. These goals, such as health education, environment education, and intercultural studies, all share common ground with OE, and they have been tied to the Olympic topic and given more emphasis within the aspirations of OE. Further, OE has the potential to draw from a variety of educational materials because of the multi-dimensional nature of the Olympic topic. Therefore, OE can be employed as a multiple tool to achieve interdisciplinary educational tasks in teaching other subjects in schools, such as language, history, art, music and even religious instruction. To this end, Naul (2008) concludes that OE could be useful and applicable in characterizing children’s behaviour repertoire both on the playground and in the classrooms, and ultimately influencing their beliefs, self-esteem, moral decision-making and social behaviours in the everyday life. Finally, he raises a cogent argument that the decisive educational goal of OE must extend beyond the school boundary itself by addressing the premise that “we do not learn for school, we learn for life” (p.113).

A dedicated Canadian Olympic educator, Deanna Binder, has been personally involved in numerous OE programs and devoted great efforts in establishing curriculum designs and fostering the promotion of Olympic value in schools. Binder (Binder & Guo, 2004) aims to provide solutions to pedagogical questions, such as how do children learn Olympic values, and what kinds of activities provide opportunities for students to learn about respect and acceptance for other people? Back to her previous call for value education within OE, Binder wrote the oft-cited “International teachers’ resource book” for OE, titled Be the Champion of Life, aiming to encourage educators to help create a world with healthier, happier children where participation in physical activities becomes a way of learning about life (Binder, 2000a, 2001). Moreover, an educational project named “Classroom trial” led primarily by Binder was launched in 2000, conducted in elementary and junior schools, and spread
quickly globally to Australia, Brazil, South Africa, United Kingdom and China (Binder, 2000a, Binder & Guo, 2004). “Classroom trial” was self-identified as a big success; the project has been warmly welcomed by school teachers, students, and their parents (Binder & Guo, 2004). Unfortunately, there is no way to explore the current educational legacy of the “Classroom trial” program since very few media records or scholarly reflections exist within contemporary OE implementations.

2.2.2 The Pedagogies of Olympic Education

If we concede that the rhetoric of OE—learning and embracing Olympism as a universal life philosophy with reference to the ideas of the founder Pierre de Coubertin—is educative, then the next questions will be how should Olympism be taught and learned, and what kind of pedagogies should be employed in the development of OE?

The IOC has always recognized Olympic pedagogy as a critical vehicle to disseminate the Olympic ideals and to transmit these perceptions into practical approaches. The Olympic Charter (2007, p.11) states that:

The goal of the Olympic Movement is to contribute to the building of a peaceful and better world by educating youth through sport practiced without discrimination of any kind and in the Olympic spirit, which requires mutual understanding with a spirit of friendship, solidarity and fair play.

There are numerous studies and scholarly discussions around the topic of Olympic pedagogy. Naul (2007) indicates two traditional foundations of Olympic pedagogy, which are the “historico-pedagogical foundations of Olympism dating from Coubertin’s writings” and the “constitutional foundations represented by the fundamental Olympic principles in the Olympic Charter.” However, he (2007) later realizes that these two foundations seem
inadequate to appropriately perceive the recent manifestations of the modern Olympic Movement, and to solve the problems children and youth currently encounter in their various social lives. In order to achieve the educational tasks and fulfill the potential of Olympic pedagogy with present-day missions, Naul (2007) adds two supplemental notions to the traditional foundations of Olympic pedagogy—“manifestations of ‘Olympic actuality’” and “individual development by integrating experience, ability and knowledge”. Consequently, an integrated didactic perception of Olympic pedagogy is presented by Naul (2007) as Olympic learning in four subject areas: learning through sporting effort, social conduct, moral behaviour, and Olympic knowledge. He further elaborates on each approach and analyzes the interlocked relations among the four within Olympic pedagogy:

Sporting effort defines the starting point for Olympic education in the area of learning motor abilities and sport skills. But sporting perfection for its own sake is not an Olympic learning objective: it aims to promote social conduct as a specific behaviour in both sporting encounters and in situations of daily life…. Social conduct is a basis or preliminary stage of moral behaviour as a general behavioural pattern…. Moral behaviour as a decision requires a socio-ethical, cognitive substantiation. Olympic knowledge is not primarily a question of knowing dates and facts from Olympic history, but of knowing and grasping the significance of the Olympic idea and its ethical standards and humanistic values for one’s own moral conduct in the face of conflicts or dilemmas. Thus it deals with the individual’s own answer to the question of why one should behave fairly and respect others (pp.5-6).

Likewise, from a pure Olympic pedagogical perspective, it is always critical to talk about both Olympic knowledge and social/moral behaviour learning through the lenses of both classroom didactics and the logic model in which the educatees participate—sports and physical activities (Kidd, B, personal communication, 2011). In the sense of classroom didactic learning, Olympic pedagogy has been described as “the science of educating
children and ensuring the intellectual development of adults”². In the latter term, however, the educational goals are supposed to be achieved through the pedagogical mechanism of sports participation and physical movement. I share this point of view and further believe that the use of sports as a pedagogical means is the most prominent characteristic that distinguishes OE from the traditional education techniques.

It is widely known that sports and physical activities involve much more than various people getting together, moving around, getting sweaty and having fun. Aside from the physiological and health-related benefits generated from exercising and active participation, sport is believed to be a valued human practice (Arnold, 1996), with great potential to develop people in various ways (e.g., intellectual, moral and ethical). For example, the rules within modern sport can train people in certain ways, which could be presented as positive behaviour manners and make the participant more self-disciplined in her/his social life. The sense of joy and satisfaction generated from striving for excellence and exceeding physical limits can cultivate and foster a persistent and dauntless spirit. Further, people’s self-esteem and confidence are believed to escalate with the accumulation and improvement of motor skills. In other words, sport *per se* is educative.

There are various ways of learning in terms of education on the broader scale, basically including learning through visual, auditory, verbal and sensatory symbols and stimuli, as well as learning through movement. Recent research shows that the majority of young people, especially children, prefer to learn through active involvement, and the educational outcomes children gain from physical experiences are believed to have greater meanings and stay with them longer (Kuczala & Lengel, 2010; Pica, 2010). There are multiple factors contributing to this argument. From the biological perspective, learning through movement

² This is the definition presented in an anonymous article named “Olympic education, critical to our development”, which was posted on the official website of the St. Vincent and the Grenadines National Olympic Committee in 2007. Neither the author’s name nor the reference of this article was identified.

creates more neural networks in people’s brains, and refines the motor skills by decreasing the error rates when people are performing specific tasks (Jensen, 2001). Another reason may simply be that moving around is just more fun. In Kuczala and Lengel’s book *The kinesthetic classroom: Teaching and learning through movement* (2010), the term “learning through movement” has been merged and equalized to “participating in physical activities”, which logically entrenches the positive role that sport and physical activity play to enhance the intellectual educational outcome and to benefit the overall development of a human being as a whole.

In stressing the role of the dynamic pedagogical approach, the *Olympic Charter* (2004) further states that “Olympic education programs at all levels need to be implemented through physical education and sports programs” (p.60). Unfortunately, compared to the spreading of the Olympic-related knowledge within classroom learning, the actual use of sport and physical activity in conducting and implementing OE practices has been largely overlooked. Therefore, many Olympic scholars and physical educators (Culpan, 2010; Culpan & Wigmore, 2010; Parry, 1998a, 1998b, 2003) call for a cooperative effort from the IOC, the NOCs and Olympic educational institutions at all levels to propose a renewed and active Olympic pedagogy, with the role of sport and physical activity emphasized and readjusted both in and outside of the classroom settings. Parry (1988) suggests that we should:

... seek to develop an account of culture and human experience which gives due weight to those forms of athletic, outdoor, sporting, aesthetic activities which focus on bodily performance, and which are generally grouped under the heading of physical education. Such an account, combining claims about human capacities and excellences with claims about the importance of a range of cultural forms, would seek to develop arguments which could justify the place of PE on the curriculum… (p.117).

In conclusion, the ultimate goals of OE can only be attained through properly designed and functionally implemented Olympic pedagogies, in which the role that sports play to promote
physical, ethical, and moral abilities should be highlighted. Finally, Parry (2003) suggests that:

Olympism is best served by educational practices which operate not only through the medium of information, but also through the universal language of values enshrined in organised physical activity, thereby providing a platform for PE teachers to achieve a number of important aims… (p.3)

2.2.3 The Learners of Olympic Education

Even though Coubertin and the subsequent Olympic leaders and scholars have constantly placed emphasis on the preservation of the purity and independence of Olympism, there is little doubt that the past Olympic Games have been largely influenced by the global political, economic and social environment. There are numerous concerns that the intrinsic educational purpose of the modern Olympic Movement might be completely lost in the blind pursuit of the podium and the considerable commercial benefits within high-performance sports. Coaches and athletes are constantly forced to concentrate on developing the athletic performances driven by various economic and political forces. (Kidd, 1996). Thus, the renowned American Olympic scholar John Lucas argues that “it would be futile to try to introduce a more humanistically focused approach into the world of high-performance sports today” (Kidd, 1996, p.88). Instead, he believes that OE should place the educational focus on children and youth, strengthen its efforts in developing the Olympism curriculum, and aim to change the next generation.

Furthermore, Pei Dongguang, an active OE practitioner in China, concedes, through his experiences of conducting OE practice, that OE should target primary and secondary school children more than university students (DG, Pei, personal communication, 2007). He believes that the younger the students are, the easier their perspectives and habits are likely
to be shaped. University students, however, are too mature, both physically and psychologically, to adopt new ideologies, and will be reluctant to make changes within their lives.

In contrast, other scholarly voices have emerged to call for a shift of focus from school children to people who are the actual participants of the Olympic Games—the top-level athletes. In recent years, famous elite athletes who are or have been very successful in the Olympic Games would constantly get invitations to attend conferences, school events, and talk about their senses and competing experiences in the Games. These kinds of activities would usually be tagged with an educational label and considered as part of OE programs by individual organizing committees. However, what about the athletes? Are there any educational programs targeting the athletes besides their routine athletic training and practicing? Wassong (2006) examines the current conceptions addressing the aspirations of OE and suggests that there are very few specific educational models for the top-level athletes, who are regarded as the “real ambassadors of Olympic education” (p.225).

Ironically, the primary reason for this is also the achievement-oriented nature of the modern Olympic Games. Athletes who are largely driven by the desire to win and the consequent respectability and material values would be most likely to focus completely on striving for their athletic development and the concomitant scientific methods to improve them. In this sense, the educational, ethical, and moral dimensions of the Olympic Games and OE would be overshadowed and neglected when the athletes’ time budgets are taken into consideration (Wassong, 2006).

Another influential figure within Olympic studies, Bruce Kidd (1996) argues that OE should place its educational emphasis on the central participants of the day-to-day training and competition within the Olympic sports, that is, the coaches and athletes. To be sure, there are growing scholarly works (Carter, 2009; Jarvie, 2007) demonstrating the roles that athletes could play to strengthen and facilitate social change by using their potential power and the
public appeal of modern sports. Olympic athletes, in particular, have constantly been envisioned as role models for the global young and subjected to higher expectations to fulfill their social responsibilities. However, increasing critiques have risen from both the public media and academia, accusing some athletes of their inappropriate behaviours (e.g., drug use, drive under influence, sexual scandals) during the Games and behind the scene. Correspondingly, Kidd (1996) notes that the athletes’ behaviours are, to some extent, understandable because for people who have learned from their experiences of being elite athletes competing in the Olympics, the Olympic project *per se* has manifested nothing much but the notions of “intense competition” and “frenzied marketing” (p.87). In this sense, the athletes should not be blamed for mistakes committed by the failings of the system at large, more specifically, the lack of proper education for elite athletes.

Kidd has further observes (personal communication, 2010) that OE should on one hand include educational programs conducted by the IOA, NOAs, Olympic solidarity, and others for participants in the Olympic movement, for instance, athletes, coaches, officials and Olympic experts, as well as the various activities and programs of NOCs and national education ministries for school children around the Olympic Games. On the other hand, OE should also extend its educational contents to people who emerge on the margins of the Olympics, including journalists, spectators, and even tourists in order to allow those people to personally experience the intercultural communications, self-testing and new relationships that occur around the Olympic Games. In other words, OE should be applicable to everybody. However, most of these educational programs realistically appear to be very much information-based, aiming to make the Olympic-related knowledge (histories, ceremonies, symbols, mottos, etc) accessible to the public, as well as to promote intercultural connections among school children. Yet these programs again have left out the developmental and educational notions of the Olympic Games for coaches and athletes to embrace (Kidd, 1996).
Consequently, Kidd (1996) advocates a “rigorous outcomes-based pedagogy” (p.88) of OE that considers coaches and athletes as the primary learners and educational objects. Further, in order to make these educational “outcomes” more predictable, he outlines the following proposals (pp.88-91):

(1) The Olympic Movement must clearly spell out those knowledges, skills, and values… and make it clear to its various constituencies… that the attainment of these educational objectives is the ultimate measure of success or failure.
(2) A much greater effort should be made to provide participants with a formal opportunity for intercultural exchange.
(3) Olympic organizations and educators should marshal the Movement’s moral suasion more directly against the abuse of human rights and war.
(4) A creation of an Olympic service corps… directly toward social development through sport, for Olympic athletes, coaches, and officials.

2.2.4 The Context of Olympic Education

The modern Olympic Movement is depicted as a global representation of human social process (MacAloon, 1981) besides its religious origin, ritual ceremony, cultural influence and a series of highly competitive sports events. Accordingly, OE, which derived from the Olympic Games, cannot possibly exclude the social and political influences that the Olympic Games encounter along its development. Sage (1993) also warns us that:

by not employing a socially critical perspective to Olympic education, we are unable to see the extent to which Olympic education practices are socially constructed by particular interests: we have difficulties recognizing how hegemonic political and economic interests shape and mould the values of our world and how human movement practices reinforce and reproduce these same values (p.153).
Therefore, Naul (2008) notes that OE can only fulfill its educational tasks when the social and political contexts in which it occurs are taken into serious consideration.

Many critical scholars, however, (Booth, 1999; Lenskyj, 2000, 2002, 2008; Morgan, 1995) accuse the persuasive Olympic educational rhetoric to lack important socio-cultural concerns. They challenge and question the current teaching materials and pedagogies within OE with their sole focus on the positive aspects of the Olympic Games and its ideology. Kohe (2010) examines contemporary OE resources used by schools in recent Olympic host cities and finds that the core of these resources strongly focus on the success of athletes and the upsurging national identities of the host countries, while they marginalize the challenging history of the Olympics. Unfortunately, the modern Olympic Movement has experienced many difficulties during its more than 110-year history. The 1980 Moscow Games were strongly boycotted by the US-led Western Bloc purely due to the political hostility during the Cold War. Large scale transnational corporations, such as McDonalds, Nike and Coca-Cola, shared a thirst for the Olympic Games and their advertising campaigns socialize children and youth to become global consumers (Kenway & Bullen, 2001). The legitimacy and prestige of the IOC have been called into question ever since the Salt Lake bribery scandal burst and people’s moral compass wavered regarding the Olympic ideal of fair play with the subsequent doping revelations. Additionally, professionalism has replaced amateurism since 1973, which has led to the performance-oriented inclination in the Olympic Games. Donnelly (1996) refers to “prolympism” as a professional model of pursuing success at elite level sports, which on one hand, heavily impacts school sports, recreational sports and youth participations in physical activities; on the other hand, it also becomes self-evident in mainstream education and challenged the previous OE rhetoric of sports for all.

Likewise, these problems of the modern Olympic Games make people question the necessity of conducting OE. Is the IOC’s educational mandate really educating and inspiring, or is it just another redundant and irrelevant propaganda tool within this disguised and neo-liberal
world? In this vein of questioning, Helen Lenskyj (2008), a critical Olympic scholar, argues that OE mostly overlaps with school physical education and moral education, because the themes that OE promotes could “probably be taught without any reference to the Olympic Games” (p.115). In fact, relying solely on Olympic sports and its ideology to convey moral and ethical contents would likely generate other inherent problems. Firstly, the notion of Olympic athletes being role models for children and students is unrealistic; since the Olympic athletes are geographically far away, and their real lives as elite athletes are quite different and infeasible for the students to learn from. Secondly, the current OE programs colonizes children’s mind and socializes them to remain very uncritical about the modern Olympic Games. Further, children may unconsciously embrace wrong notions, such as discrimination, sexism and racism, within the improper and unethical portrait of the Olympic Games and athletes’ behaviours in the mass media. Last but not least, Olympic host cities have been accused of exploiting children’s energies by allocating them into welcoming shows and other cultural activities to promote their bidding and fulfill their promise of conducting OE for the IOC (Lenskyj, 2008).

Correspondingly, there is some undeniable truth to what Lenskyj argues, but time and again she takes her arguments to absurd conclusions. First, the impact of Olympic athletes as role models is very much a situational question. There is no doubt that some Olympic athletes appeal to some children and not to others, and the relationship is shaped (but not completely determined) by class, gender, ethnicity/nationality and sexual orientation, as well as the athlete’s ethics and other factors (Kidd, personal communication, 2010). Nonetheless, we should also realize that not all Olympic athletes are worthy of emulation. Second, as much as I share the concern that sports role models, as embedded in the stereotypical Western physical culture, (e.g., the notion of male dominance, the upper/middle class oriented) may entrench certain discriminations, but they can also help to overturn the setbacks. In fact, the IOC has always tried to highlight outstanding athletes who come out of disadvantaged backgrounds (e.g., women athletes, athletes coming from poverty and war-devastated countries), against obvious prejudice. Last but not least, it is an exaggeration to accuse OE
programs of “exploiting” children’s energies. On one hand, unless the children are injured or otherwise harmed by such participation, we would hardly call it “exploitation”. On the other hand, I think that people who should be able to decide whether they have been exploited or not are the children themselves in any case. Unfortunately, there is not much research been done among those children. Without the research, we cannot say for sure what impact OE has fostered in the people’s lives.

Responding to the call, Ren Hai (2009) writes beautifully: “Olympic education aims to cultivate qualified citizens of the ‘global village,’ to help them break through the various limitations of their respective societies, to impress the seal of a world citizen on top of the existing identity of a national citizen” (p.47). In this sense, OE emerges in the vacancy of a global education and offers a counter-balance by presenting the nation within a world system. Also, the power relation patterns between students and teachers within OE differ from the ones in traditional education. Culpan (2010) argues that OE essentially empowers students and engages them to actively learn Olympic principles through participating in sports and physical activities by encouraging the students to ask questions about the Olympic Movement, sports and values to help them critically examine the implications of their learning results. Finally, Brownell (2009) suggests that what differentiates OE from the traditional school education is that OE revolves around the Olympic Games and the market-oriented appeals of the Olympic symbols make OE more interesting and attractive to students.

As much as I share these opinions and count myself as one of the supporters of OE, the pedagogical question remains to what extent should the critical and radical education notions mix into the traditional rhetoric of Olympism, so that children and students are able to embrace the Olympics comprehensively, but not prejudicially? Culpan (2010) proposes a critical pedagogy in physical education, which has been soon applied to the OE field. The focal point of the critical pedagogy is essentially about “understanding the relationship between power and knowledge…, identifying inequalities and empowering individuals and
groups to take social action to achieve change” (Culpan, 2010, p. 146. cf. Culpan & Bruce, 2007). Particularly, in the context of conducting OE, the critical pedagogy requires students and teachers to

explore questions, issues and challenges that expose the relevance of Olympism to the contemporary world, identify inequalities that exist in sport and seek out and establish practices and procedures that are likely to address and rectify problems associated with social equitableness and to better manifest the principles of Olympism (Culpan, 2010, p. 148).

This pedagogy fills the noncritical vacuum of previous OE resources and promotes critical thinking about the role that sports and the Olympic Movement play within society. Meanwhile, this critical pedagogy is believed to be more socially inclusive, with more fervent concerns regarding the disadvantaged groups, both within and without modern sports and the Olympic Games (Lawson, 1999). It explicitly encourages education authorities and PE teachers to draw more parallels between Olympism and physical education, and aims to highlight the roles that sports, physical activities, and health play within the national education system. Take New Zealand’s case as an example: the Ministry of Education (1999) issued a “Health and Physical Education in the New Zealand Curriculum”, which was believed to be challenging to the “existing dominant scientific or technocratic physical education paradigms” (Culpan, 2008, p.2). Within this curriculum, teachers and students were expected to implement a socio-cultural critical approach to physical education, while acknowledging the learners’ operated within diverse social and cultural environments (Culpan, 2008, Culpan & Bruce, 2007). Finally, Culpan (2008, 2010) also calls for the IOC to strengthen its efforts to provide leadership and necessary contexts in order to maximize the learning opportunities and diversify the teaching pedagogies of OE.

Further, the socio-critical nature of this pedagogy has the potential to expose the inequalities and the power relations within the paradigms of modern sports the Olympic Movement, and
it is believed to be capable of changing students’ behaviours, either consciously or unconsciously, but both individually and socially (Culpan, 2010). Finally, if this new Olympic pedagogy is to be fully implemented, the future students would be able to develop a strong sense of social responsibility and social justice within and beyond the classroom settings (Culpan, 2008, 2010; Culpan & Wigmore, 2010). Also, students would be better prepared when they are located in the real world to face and deal with complicated social issues. Only with all these emancipatory goals achieved would the ultimate educational missions of contemporary OE be considered as a completion to this end.

2.3 Olympic Education Practice: A Historical Review

Although the official definition of “Olympic education”, did not appear in the work of the Olympic Movement and the research of Olympic scholars until the 1970s, the educational activities and programs conducted in reference to the Olympic Games and Olympism are believed to have much longer historical standing. Same as its aspirations and educational tasks, the practice of OE should also be identified within two contexts: OE within the classroom settings, and the unofficial educational programs carried out through the logic model of sports and physical activities. In the first category, it is quite noticeable that OE has developed into a broad range of formal activities of teaching and learning about the Olympic Movement. The educational practice covers various educational programs conducted by different institutions. For instance, the subcommittee of the IOC, Committee for Culture and Olympic Education, which was founded in 2000, takes the responsibility for implementing Olympic cultural programs and organizing Olympic youth camps, as well as the subsequent Olympic Congresses (Pei, 2006, lecture notes, Olympic studies). Four other sub-organizations of the IOC, which serve as supportive pillar for OE programs, are: the Olympic Solidarity Committee (founded in 1961); the Olympic Museum in Lausanne (established in 1993); the Olympic Truce Foundation (founded in 1991) and the World Anti-Doping Agency (founded in 1999). Additionally, the IOA, established in Olympia,
Greece, in 1961, also plays an indispensable role in training Olympic scholars and disseminating Olympic education ideals by organizing annual sessions and graduate seminars.

Likewise, the second way to examine OE practices needs to focus on the experiential learning-by-doing of participating in sport in an Olympic context. There is no agreement on which country initiated OE; however, many European scholars (Georgiadis, 2008; Müller, 2000; Naul, 2008; Tavares, 2006) focus on Germany, partly because Coubertin is also believed to be very much inspired by his field trip to Germany (Weber, 1970). In the early 20th century, many towns in Germany held local gymnastic and other sport competitions for school children. Physical activities and the celebrations at that time imperceptibly transmitted Olympic values because the winners were expected to compete in the “National Olympic Games” (p.44) of all Germans (Naul, 1989). Moreover, Germany was also believed to “achieve a most particular milestone for OE in schools within the regular three-hour gymnastic lessons” (Naul, 1989).

Additionally, Germany also took the credit as OE’s pioneer in establishing the first permanent National Olympic Committee (Müller, 1994; Naul, 1997) and holding the first international Congress for Health Education (Naul, 1998), both in 1904. Carl Diem (1942, as cited in Naul, 2008) noted that even though some of Coubertin’s principles and the Olympic ideals were incorporated into the physical training and ceremonies for the 1936 Berlin Games, the educational message was “completely misused and transmitted by the ideology of Nazi Regime” (p.48). Furthermore, the honorary dean of the IOA, Konstantinos Georgiadis (2008) indicated that the first official OE program was also implemented in Munich’s Olympic Games in 1972, and it had set an example for the following Montreal OE programs in 1976.

To be sure, we cannot simply measure the outcomes of OE by examining and scrutinizing its aspirations and educational principles, equal attention should be given to how these Olympic
ideals are transmitted into practice and benefit whoever receives it in and outside of the host countries. In recent decades, since OE has been given increasing attention by the IOC and host cities, more and more research and scholarly works appeared regarding various OE programs held in host cities. The following section is a discussion focused on the school-based educational efforts carried out by Olympic organizing committees and NOCs. Four Olympic host cities (two Olympic summer Games and two winter Games) and their OE programs will be discussed respectively. The four Olympic host cities will be presented in a chronological manner. Major questions I aim to pursue are whether the IOC’s agenda of OE has really been conducted as the Olympic Movement intends in the national education systems in these host countries and whether it has been beneficial to the children and youth who received it.

2.3.1 Montreal

The 1976 Montreal Olympic Games were the first Olympic Games that Canada ever hosted. Within current literature (Guay, 1996; Official Report of the Games of the XXI Olympiad, 1978; Pound, 2003) regarding legacies of the Montreal Games, the educational message was largely overshadowed by the financial crisis and the political boycott. In spite of this, it is believed that the Montreal Olympics initiated one of the earliest formal Olympic educational practices (Binder, 2000) and took the first step to conduct OE in a systematic manner (Geng, et al., 2009). A program named “Promotion of Olympism in the School System” (POSS) was launched to explore the Olympic ideals in local schools by teaching children Olympic-related knowledge and hosting sports festivals. The POSS program was claimed to be the watershed in the development of OE projects (Geng, et al., 2009). University professors and local teachers helped to incorporate Olympic knowledge and values into informative texts and pictures with appropriate pedagogical strategies. These educational programs were also conducted in some English-speaking schools, however, according to
Spangberger (1994, as cited in Binder 2000), these materials did not receive wide use outside of the province of Quebec.

2.3.2 Calgary

Different from Montreal’s initial attempt, the educational programs of the Calgary 1988 Olympic Winter Games were funded by the governments of Canada and Alberta, and supervised by the Organizing Committee of the Calgary Olympics. An education curriculum committee, which consisted of volunteer teachers and university professors, was founded in 1983, aiming to spread knowledge of the Olympic winter sports and foster children with community spirit. The committee distributed educational materials (Olympic knowledge booklets, bilingual program binders, and educational kits) to all schools in Alberta (*Official Report of the Games of the XV Olympiad*, 1988); school teachers then adapted and integrated these materials into classrooms (Binder, 2000). The program soon became nation-wide when it was taken over by the Canadian Olympic Association (Lenskyj, 2004). With the financial and policy support from the organizing committee, the Canadian Olympic Academy (COA), and the Federal government, as well as numerous help from the volunteers, the educational programs of the 1988 Calgary Olympics initiated a type of large-scale and multi-dimensional model for OE. On the other hand, there were criticisms pointing to the fact that although the Calgary programs scored significantly higher among schools, Coubertin’s Olympic ideals and the moral and ethical messages seemed to be “hidden” in the various classroom activities (Spangenberger, 1994, as cited in Binder, 2000).

2.3.3 Nagano

The OE of the 1998 Nagano Olympic Winter Games was a collaborative effort conducted by the national government, the Japanese Olympic Committee, the Ministry of Education, the Nagano Prefectural Board of Education, and many private organizations (Masumoto, 2004).
Different visions of Olympic knowledge textbooks, together with Olympic winter Games readers and newsletters were published in 1994 and distributed to schools at all three levels across Japan (Official Report of the Games of the XVIII Olympiad, 1998).

The most influential OE project of the Nagano Games was the “One School, One Country” program. The program was primarily conducted before the Nagano Games took place to promote international exchanges on the grass-root level. Each of the 76 schools in Nagano was paired with a country participating in the Nagano Olympics. Students learned about the culture and customs of their partner countries through various exchange activities. During the Games, foreign athletes, and NOC officials were invited to those schools and were introduced to traditional Japanese food, music and culture by the school children (Official Report of the Games of the XVIII Olympiad, 1998). The goal of this program was aimed at increasing familiarity between different cultures, and cultivating students with broad international visions, which also coincides with the Olympic spirit of friendship and mutual understanding. Japan’s “One School, One Country” program is the first of its kind in the OE history and it set the model for international exchange projects for the future host cities. The program was warmly welcomed worldwide; it extended to the 2000 Summer Games in Sydney and the 2002 Salt Lake Winter Games. Starting from the 2006 Torino Winter Games, the IOC decided to conduct this kind of international exchange program as an official educational mandate (Graver A, Cammiss. L, Charlton C & Plantak. J, 2010; Findling J, & Pelle K Eds, 2004; Kwauk, 2008; Masumoto, 2004; Naul, 2008; Ren, 2009). Beijing’s “Heart-to-Heart” project, which aimed to link the Chinese Olympic education model schools with their sister schools around the world, was also built upon the Nagano model (Geng, 2007, 2009; Pei, 2008; Ren, 2009).

In addition, Nagano initiated environmental education as part of the OE project (Binder, 2000), based on the consideration of the negative environmental impacts that Olympic host cities would likely receive from staging the Games. Under the guidance of teachers and parents, children in Nagano established a special feature theme program called “Olympic

2.3.4 Sydney

The OE project of the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games was called “Sydney’s Olympic National Education Program”, which was conducted primarily under the supervision of the Sydney Olympic Organizing Committee (SOCOG), local government, universities and sport institutes all over Australia (Official Report of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad, 2001). The educational program successfully reached all of Australia’s 3.2 million school students, and was one of the largest-scale efforts in the history of OE practice at that time (Official Report of the Games of the XXVII Olympiad, 2001).

Sydney’s OE program included the following parts: a student newspaper named O-News, designed by the Olympic media sponsor Fairfax, and was distributed to schoolchildren from grade 3 up throughout the country. An interactive school resource kit, named Aspire, was published by SOCOG and the New South Wales Education Ministry, which aimed to promote the Olympic spirit, emphasize the environmental protection, and explore some critical issues related to organizing the Olympic Games (Toohey, Crawford & Halbwirth, 2000). Annual Olympic cultural festivals and art displays were held from 1997 to 2000, exploring the aboriginal Australian culture, the “sea culture” and the “Australian spirits” (Geng et al., 2009). SOCOG employed full use of modern technology and established an affiliated educational website called “Kids” under the official website of the 2000 Games.3 “Kids” provided Australian children and students with interactive leisure and learning.

3 The original website of Kids can not be found on line, this is the website of the Sydney Olympics: http://www.sydneyolympicfc.com/
activities; it also offered a feature section for parents and teachers to provide supportive resources and educational rationale for the Sydney Games (Binder, 2000). This website set a perfect example for Vancouver’s 28 feature OE programs in 2010. An Olympic volunteer education program named the “Youth Ambassador Plan” was launched in 1998, and it attracted thousands of students to contribute to the Olympic Games (Binder, 2000). Moreover, as an extension to the 1998 Nagano Olympic education, the Sydney 2000 National Education Program helped primary school students to establish contacts with Olympic participant teams from other countries to increase international communication, build friendship and strengthen mutual understanding. (Toohey et al.). These international exchange programs are described as “the intangible and most important educational legacy of the Sydney Games” (Toohey et al., p.16).

On the other hand, within the OE opposition faction, Lenskyj (2000, 2002, 2004, 2008) accused the SOCOG for using children’s free labor for Olympic industry purposes. She raised examples such as 160,000 Australian school children had been mobilized to sign petitions before the Sydney bidding in order to urge the IOC to choose Sydney as the host city for the 2000 Olympics (Schimmel & Chandler, 1998, as cited in Lenskyj, 2000); in the National education program, children’s artwork submissions to the art programs, with the winning entries, were copyrighted and used for Olympic industry profit; the IOC and the Olympic corporate sponsors including Coca-Cola, IBM, Visa, and Westpac Bank, “exploited Olympic ideals rhetoric through the educational projects” (2004, p.153). To be sure, there are many truths to what Lenskyj has said, although sometimes she takes her argument too far and ends up with extreme conclusions. Given the enormous popularity brought by mega-events like the Olympic Games, the fact is most children and schools compete to be so involved and participated. I think this is a case of Lenskyj going “over the top” by accusing the Games organizing committees to recruit children in activities of any kind. However, I share the critique of the fact that many OE programs rely largely on Olympic sponsors to deliver, again this does not mean the educatees would automatically be brainwashed and

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turned into “global consumers”. Additionally, this concern is not only limited to the Olympic Movement. Therefore, I would suggest a shift of focus and call on more comprehensive and in-depth research to be conducted in further studies to examine the OE practices in host countries and their educational legacies.

In summary, a brief historical overview of the OE practice in previous host countries is provided in this section—with Montreal and Calgary serving specific Canadian-oriented contexts. This is done to offer a broader perspective of previous practical experiences in OE and guide the future Olympic host cities to better situate OE programs in schools. Likewise, two issues require further scrutiny in my proposed research with respect to the school-based OE programs in Beijing: (1) How teachers and students actually used the OE resources (e.g., textbooks, booklets, toolkits, brochures) and what they learned from these materials. (2) The various cultural programs, art shows, environmental protection campaigns and the international exchange programs contribute important aspects to the OE development. However, their relationship with sports and physical education deserves closer inspection. This historical review allows me to better examine the OE programs conducted in host cities. It also points out ways for future Olympic host cities to implement OE practice. They should be able to avoid the defects and blaze new trails in their Olympic educational projects. Also, more efforts are needed to incorporate sports and physical activities as the real logic models into OE practice under the Olympic themes.
Chapter 3
Methodology

This section outlines the methodology that I employed throughout my research. I begin with a brief discussion of Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E), which serves as the theoretical rationale of the qualitative methodology in my research project. Then I move on to introduce the OE model schools and my involvement as a researcher through the data collection process, followed by my use of textual analysis, interview, and storytelling as the methods of data collection and analysis. Finally, I conclude with how I managed to ensure my research process was ethical.

3.1 Monitoring and Evaluation – Rationale

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) are in fact two separate yet interrelated terms referring to two sets of organizational systems. In general, monitoring is the process of systematically collecting and analyzing information gathered from a planned or agreed program (Coalter, 2006; Shapiro, 2001), and it usually occurs while the project is progressing (Shapiro, 2001). Deploying an active and effective monitoring mechanism enables the researcher to identify the extent to which the program has been delivered as planned and illuminate the changes and adaptations to make towards achieving the ultimate goals of the project (Coalter, 2006). Evaluation, on the other hand, is the process of comparing and contrasting the actual program outcomes to the agreed criteria by strategically examining the monitoring data (Coalter, 2006; Shapiro, 2001). The evaluation process focuses on the goals and objectives that people want to achieve, the outcomes that people actually achieved out of the program, and how people manage to do it. In other words, the primary concerns are efficiency, effectiveness, and impact (Coalter, 2006; Shapiro, 2001). Therefore, to combine monitoring
and evaluation as a whole and conduct a rigorous M&E system requires researchers and program designers to set up very clear goals and objectives, effectively track and collect information, and timely report the results.

The methodology of M&E has been applied to a variety of fields, ranging from business, poverty reduction, environmental sustainability, rural development, education, the global campaign against HIV/AIDS, sports for development and peace (SDP) and social development. The data collection process of M&E includes the traditional research methods of quantitative analysis, questionnaires and surveys, interviews (individual and group), as well as the increasingly utilized qualitative methods of storytelling and cultural expressions (Coalter, 2006; Kidd, 2009b; World Bank, 2004). According to Denzin and Lincoln (2005), multiple-pronged methods approaches “reflect an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question” (p.5).

My use of M&E as the methodological approach for this research came from the basic principles of conducting a process-led M&E study. I had been struggling to obtain a reliable and functional means to measure the educational outcomes of the OE programs conducted before and during the Beijing Olympic Games, which did not seem to be simply countable by numbers. However, it is noticeable that M&E is not the perfect approach to guide through this study because it should be employed at the same time as an educational initiative is taking place. Unfortunately, my study was limited by the fact that Beijing’s OE program was a completed project that is no longer functioning. Likewise, I followed the evaluation rationale within M&E and aimed to compare the goals that were set out and the ultimate outcomes that had been achieved in OE. In this study, I focused on drawing qualitative data from any monitoring systems that were in place, comparing the objectives and the outputs, and evaluating the OE project by scrutinizing how it was implemented. More specifically, I sought to identify the “actual learning outcomes of Olympism” by looking at how the OE programs achieved the educational goals set out by the IOC and the Olympic Movement at large, and how the program receivers (i.e., the students) experienced it.
3.2 A Brief Background of the “Research Site”

When Beijing was bidding to host the 2008 Olympic Games, the city promised to implement Olympic-related cultural programs and spread OE to 400 million youths across China, especially to the 230 million primary and middle school students (Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Vol 3). For that purpose, in December 2005, BOCOG and the Chinese Ministry of Education worked out a primary and middle School OE Program and designated 556 OE model (demonstration) schools nationwide, with 200 of them in Beijing, aiming to take leading roles to disseminate Olympic knowledge, promote good examples and push forward the implementation of OE across the country.

Yang Fangdian Central Primary School is one of the OE model schools in Beijing. It is a public school in Haidian District and it used to be considered at a lower/middle level among primary schools in Beijing, mostly due to the fact that the majority of the student sources come from working class families (Pei, 2008). However, Yang Fangdian Central Primary School is believed to pioneer the OE practice in schools and is identified to be one of the most vigorous figures in Beijing’s OE campaign. According to Pei (2008) and Zhou (personal communication, September, 2007), Yang Fangdian Central Primary School initiated the first OE program in 2001, four years earlier than BOCOG launched the official program in December 2005. Therefore, students who participated in OE programs in this school are believed to have more experiences and possess better chances to provide valuable insights and stories. All student interviewees recruited and who ultimately participated in this research project graduated from Yang Fangdian Central Primary School.

Since there was very limited qualitative research regarding the educational outcomes of mega-events (Graver, Cammiss, Charlton & Plantak, 2010), nor have the voices of the

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5 A project named Beijing School Olympic Education Action Plan was launched in December 2005 by the Beijing Municipal Education commission, which marked the initiation of the official Olympic education program.
program-receivers ever been heard or revealed, my purpose of conducting this school-based research is to compare the unofficial stories told by the program participants (i.e., school students) to their official counterparts (e.g., the documentation released by BOCOG, the media coverage, etc). I aim to empower the students, amplify their voices and learn about their experiences and opinions, with the ultimate goal to evaluate the impact of Beijing’s OE programs upon the student recipients.

3.3 Role of the Researcher

I initially became interested in OE in 2006 when I was doing my undergraduate studies at the Capital University of Sports and Physical Education in Beijing, China. In that year, I took a bilingual course titled “Olympic Studies” with the course instructor Professor Pei Dongguang, who had received a Master’s degree from Western University, London, Ontario, and who enjoyed an affiliation with its International Center for Olympic Studies. He is regarded to be the first person to initiate OE practice in China. I was inspired by him and joined his grass-root OE promotion team later, which offered me tremendous opportunities for personal involvement in developing and promoting OE programs in primary and secondary schools. I attended Olympic-related educational programs and ceremonies, observed classes and talked to students, PE teachers and school principals at three schools in Beijing. Moreover, I often worked as an interpreter when foreign officials and scholars came to Beijing to inspect and study the OE activities. I attended international and national Olympic studies conferences in Beijing and volunteered for the 2008 Olympic Games. These experiences helped me develop connections with many local and international scholars in the Olympic field as well as some major members from the IOA, the Beijing OE expert team, and staff in the Beijing Municipal Education Commission. Therefore, I am well aware of how some OE programs were conducted.
Likewise, the way in which I got involved with OE primarily from 2007 to 2009 has put me into an interesting position. On one hand, I have seen a lot of things going on, such as how students and teachers prepared for and executed the OE programs, and I participated as a translator in many interviews and talks between foreign scholars and local Chinese. On the other hand, I was not acting as a researcher and did not take detailed ethnographic notes while I was on site. Hence, because I did not work for BOCOG or any other official organization, I was not treated as someone from the “top”. Instead, I was called “big sister” by the students and seen as a friend by some school teachers, which provided more intimacy and casual talks that I all considered as valuable sources.

I am very conscious of the fact that things cannot be the same as three years ago during the Olympic hype, and I may be treated differently because my role has changed—I am now a researcher studying in a foreign university. When I went back to conduct my interviews in May 2012, I constantly reminded myself of my responsibility as a researcher to acknowledge the inherent power relationships with the research participants. In order to take a fresh new gaze towards my previous experiences which might to some extent shape my perspectives and explore issues in greater depth and length, I situated myself as being both an insider and outsider to the participants and allowed them adequate time and freedom to share their views and stories.

3.4 Data Collection

In order to gain a holistic understanding of the OE programs on a domestic level, this study employed a three-pronged methodology for data collection, including textual analysis, semi-structured interview and storytelling. By using a variety of techniques while combing data from multiple sources, I aim to triangulate underlying themes and generate more nuanced knowledge.
3.4.1 Textual analysis

Textual analysis is defined as an information-gathering method, which is applicable to “researchers who want to understand the ways in which members of various cultures and subcultures make sense of who they are, and of how they fit into the world in which they live” (McKee, 2003, p.1). A text takes many forms, such as books, television programs, films, magazines, cloths, decorations, etc (McKee, 2003).

For the purpose of this study, the appropriate texts that were collected and analyzed consist of the following: the bid documents and the three-volume official reports of the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games (both can be found and accessed at http://www.la84foundation.org/) released by BOCOG; Beijing Olympic Education Working Report (2009) released by the Beijing Olympic Education Standing Office; the OE webpage of the official website of Beijing Olympic Games (http://en.beijing2008.cn/education/) and scholarly works incorporating historical materials, theoretical foundations and empirical knowledge relating to the most recent OE attempts. All these texts can be accessed online publicly or with a UTORid. In addition, during the interview process, two PE teachers offered to show me other texts at their schools, including Olympic Knowledge reading books both for elementary and secondary school students, newspaper reports and two special issues of school-based magazines presenting OE activities in their schools, props and sports equipments they used for the OE activities, as well as numerous photos, OE themed banners, brochures and exhibitions. All of these texts provided me access to both the official record and actual implementation of OE programs in schools; they also allowed me a richer context for more in-depth conversations with my key informants and the student participants.

3.4.2 Interview

Interview is widely acknowledged as a useful method of qualitative data collection. I conducted individual semi-structured interviews with five key informants in Beijing during
May 2012. These five figures, including two university professors, one government official and two PE teachers, were intentionally selected because they all were heavily involved in the preparation, organization and implementation of Beijing’s OE programs. All interviewees were recruited by the researcher directly by email and their participation was voluntary. After the participants expressed interest in participating in the study, they were each provided with an informed consent letter (see Appendix B1 & 2) by email indicating the details and potential risks of their participation in this research project, and they were all made aware that their participation was completely voluntary.

Interviews lasted approximately from 60 to 90 minutes and all of the interviews were conducted face-to-face. I was anxious to accommodate the schedule of each participant, so all interviews took place at a time and place that were suggested by the interviewees. Four interviews were conducted in Mandarin Chinese and one in English; this was also based on the preference of the interviewees since their English proficiency varies. Interviews conducted in Mandarin Chinese were then carefully translated by the researcher into English for the purpose of this project. Each interview was audio-recorded upon request at the beginning of the interview and taped data were later transcribed verbatim, coded and analyzed by the researcher. All participants were given in-kind compensation (i.e., a University of Toronto Postcard) at the end of the interviews in recognition of their time and contribution to this research project.

Given the fact that the selected potential interviewees are considered to be experts in either theory or practice regarding Beijing’s OE program, I created a specific (yet fairly flexible) question guide (see Appendix A) with questions addressed to each interviewee and kept in mind not to make any participant uncomfortable or ashamed in the interview process. Therefore, the interviews pursued both general questions about the Beijing OE programs and person-specific questions tailed to each key informant’s specific role. I kept it in mind that the question guide was only meant to be used as a framework to help me stay focused and reflect back to specific research questions, as opposed to a rigid structure to follow. Also, I
encouraged and allowed time for interviewees to speak on tangents when new ideas emerged to stimulate spontaneous conversations and their narratives flew easily.

3.4.3 Storytelling

Storytelling generally refers to the use of stories or narratives (e.g., vivid descriptions of ideas, beliefs, personal experiences, and life lessons) as a communication tool to gain knowledge from and share it among individuals (Serrat, 2008). It provides a broader context in which old knowledge circulates and new knowledge arises, which could lead to shifts in both attitude and behaviour and create raw and re-useable materials (Brutshin, Colton & Ward, 2006; Serrat, 2008). The process of this method is very similar to a non-structured or an open-ended interview. In my research, I used storytelling as the main method to learn about the students’ experiences while they were participating in OE programs. These experiences are critically important because this is the first time that the students’ voices were heard and amplified, and the first time that Beijing’s OE project was portrayed through the lenses of its beneficiaries. My reason of choosing storytelling over interview to gain students’ experiences was to make sure that the students were really liberated so that they were able to share stories and speak about their experiences in a way that makes the most sense to them, instead of letting the school authorities, teachers, or the researcher (i.e., myself) guide them.

All students recruited for this research graduated from Yang Fangdian Central Primary School and all were former students of PE teacher Mr. Zhang, who is also one of the key informants. They were all very actively participated in OE program when it was functioning at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School from 2002 to 2008. After I approached Mr. Zhang and expressed my intention to speak to the students, he was very positive about the

\[6\] Although this interviewee gave me permission to use his real name for the purpose of this thesis, I have substituted pseudonyms to protect the participant’s confidentiality.
possibility of me talking to the students and agreed to help. When students graduated from Yang Fangdian Central Primary school, some of them registered in an alumni directory for the purpose of keeping in future touch with their teachers and fellow classmates. Mr. Zhang provided everyone on the alumni list to the researcher; I then sent recruiting emails (see Appendix C1-4) to the potential participants by myself, asking about their interest in participating, and students replied to me about whether or not they wished to participate.

Each student who expressed interest in participating was offered an information package including a research protocol (see Appendix F1& 2), letter of assent (see Appendix D1& 2) and letter of consent (see Appendix E1 & 2)⁷. The research protocol informed the potential participant of the study (e.g., background information, commitment requirement, etc.). The letter of assent asked the student to authorize her/his participation in this study and the parental consent letter informed each guardian/parent of the purpose of this research, and provided an opportunity for them to approve the involvement of their adolescent in this study. Since all student participants in this research speak Chinese as their first language and their English proficiency varies based on their education background, all recruitment emails and letters were provided in both Chinese and English language by the researcher. Two students were not sure about the accuracy of the translated version of the information package and therefore asked me for confirmation and their English teachers for verification before they signed and participated.

Initially, I was worried that the students might be intimidated by signing the assent letter because this might be the first time ever for them to participate in an interview/meeting with a stranger who studies in a foreign university and approaches them to conduct a research project. Also, because it is not required as a research convention to seek ethical approvals from institution or organization when conducting research in the social sciences and humanities in China⁸, some students thought it was too complicated and were reluctant to

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⁷ Parental/Guardian Consent Letter was only distributed to the students to take home for their parents/guardians to view and sign when the student participants are under the age of 18.

⁸ Certification letter was provided under Appendix-H.
present the consent letter to their parents/guardians. Accordingly, I thoroughly went through every important detail in the letters regarding their voluntary nature of participation and assured them that the only reason they needed to discuss their participation with their parents/guardians was because they were under the legal age to authorize. Also, I encouraged the students not to hesitate to contact me directly with any questions and/or concerns at any time, and to ask their parents/guardian to contact me if needed. At the beginning of each meeting, each participant was again made aware that they had full rights to pass any questions, choose to participate or withdraw without any repercussion at any time, and their transcribed data can be accessed upon request. I also reminded them that all information they released for the purpose of this research would be kept strictly confidential throughout the whole process. Meanwhile, they were allowed to create a pseudonym themselves to retain anonymity.

Six students who were actively involved within the OE project participated in storytelling to elaborate on their experiences embracing the program. For clarification purposes, an information table (see Table 1) was created to summarize all six students’ pseudonyms, ages, genders, current education stages and lengths of exposure to OE at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School.

All conversations were conducted in person independently and lasted approximately 60 minutes. Since I did not want to inconvenience the students nor did I want anyone to participate at the cost of missing class, four meetings took place during weekends and the other two in early evenings after school; all six meetings were arranged at a coffee/tea shop near where the students lived or studied that were suggested by them. All conversations were audio-recorded upon request and all were conducted in Mandarin Chinese. Each participant was treated with soft drinks and/or snacks at the coffee/tea shop and was given a University of Toronto pin or keychain as compensation.

Table 1. Student participants’ information table
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name (Pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Current Education Stage</th>
<th>Lengths of Exposure to OE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>James</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Junior university student</td>
<td>2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rebecca</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jillian</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andy</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Freshman university student</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helen</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>4 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5 Data Analysis

The use of all three methods for data collection ensured a comprehensive approach to the research questions and provided the basis for examining and evaluating OE programs in schools. Data gathered from textual analysis, interviews and storytelling was triangulated and treated collectively, and was later subjected to “thematic analysis”. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative analytical method for:
Identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes your data set in (rich) detail. However, it goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic (p.79).

In thematic analysis, the primary task of the researcher is to “identify a limited number of themes which adequately reflect their textual data (Howitt & Cramer, 2005, p.285).” Following Braun and Clarke (2006, p.82), a theme “captures something important about the data in relation to the research questions and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set.” After the initial codes are generated, the researcher is also expected to go back and forth to alter and modify the pre-identified theme sets during latter stages of research analysis in order to get a full picture of the data and produce comprehensive writings (Howitt & Cramer, 2005).

During the interview process, every conversation was audio-recorded to ensure the accuracy of the narratives. I started with transcribing each tape-recorded interview verbatim in a Word document and translating the data accordingly. I also emailed a copy to some respective interviewees in order to let them confirm and elaborate on previous points. Considering the dynamic nature of my interviewee sources, data was classified into different sets based on the interviewees’ identifications. Special attention was given to the often overlapping speeches and significant disagreements over same/similar questions. Non-verbal cues (e.g., laughter, silence, facial expression and body language) were also noted in the transcripts immediately after the narrative. I also kept notes in the right margin of the transcript pages when connections were identified and new ideas emerged.

After narrative data has been transcribed, all texts (documents, interview transcripts and transcribed narrative data) were thoroughly read, I began to code the data manually in order to establish overarching themes. Using these themes, open coding and focus coding were employed to attach meanings to words and phrases. Also, the systematic review of the document texts took place prior to the collection of narrative data. This gap in time allowed
me to tailor questions in the following interviews towards exploring emergent themes and related narrative data to the information found in the document texts. Conscious efforts were made throughout the data collection and analysis to compare/contrast, and reflect upon themes generated from each data set, as well as to relate to coded data to each other in the hope of producing multiple answers to the research questions.

3.6 Ethics

This study received ethics approval from the University of Toronto’s Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (see Appendix G – Ethics Letter of Approval). Given the anticipated risks associated with this study, I had considered the possibility that asking questions about experiences and opinions regarding the OE program might be difficult, frustrating and/or emotional for some participants if their experiences had been negative. Also, social risks might include loss of privacy regarding government officials. These risks were mitigated by providing a detailed description of the research project and consent letters through emails and at the beginning of each conversation so that the interviewees and the students would have full knowledge about their participation. I would always give top priority to protecting their privacy and all information released by each participant will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Although some interviewees gave me permissions to use their real names for the purpose of this thesis, I have also substituted pseudonyms to protect the participants’ confidentiality. Moreover, every participant had the right to “pass” any uncomfortable questions, and/or stop the communication at any time without consequences.

Raw data from audio recordings was kept in a locked cabinet before transcription to which only I have access to. Interview transcriptions were saved on a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick. I am the sole individual who has access to the identifiable information about the participants, and my supervisor and committee members would also have access to reviewing data used for supervisory purpose of the thesis.
Audio-recording data would be immediately deleted after it had been transcribed. All written data would be destroyed immediately after completion and passing of this thesis.

The participants were also informed both in the consent letters and at the beginning of each interview that their identities might be exposed by “indirect identifiers”. Participants were invited to choose: 1) participate in this research as named; 2) recognizing the possibilities that they might be identified, still participate; 3) withdraw at anytime during the research or not to participate. Although this required a certain amount of trust which may be difficult to build up within such a short notice, none of the participants had problems regarding their participation in this research project.
Chapter 4
Findings and Discussions

Findings are presented in two major sections in accordance with the two perspectives addressed in research questions. The first section draws data from the five key informants and analyzes the motivations behind implementing OE on such a large scale. Also, a discussion of a collaborative relationship between the government and people provides numerous inside stories and sheds light on the unique mechanism that assisted the implementation of OE in schools. The second section unpacks the students’ narratives with respect to their experiences of OE when the program was functioning. The discussion of how the students conceptualize OE and what influences OE programs provide to the students allows me to scrutinize OE through the lenses of its recipients and examine the program from the bottom-up perspective.

Part One. Motivations and Implementations of Olympic Education in Schools

4.1. The Imagined/Expected Roles of Olympic Education

4.1.1. To Achieve the Commitments

_Without Olympic Education, Olympism could not attain its noble objectives._

Juan Antonio Samaranch

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9 This was cited from the preface of a Chinese Olympic education textbook *The Olympic Movement* by Dr. Ren Hai. Mr. Samaranch wrote the preface for that book in 2005.
It is stipulated in the IOC’s Host City Contract that every host country shall implement Olympic-related educational and cultural programs three years prior to the opening of the Olympic Games. In fulfillment of the IOC’s requirement, upon being awarded the right to host the 2008 Summer Olympic Games, Beijing had made the commitment to “initiate public education programs between 2001 and 2008 to educate the 1.25 billion Chinese people, in particular 400 million youths and teenagers, about the Olympic spirit” (Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Vol.1, p.47). To support that, US $ 100 million would be spent between 2005 and 2008 on educational and cultural activities (Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Vol.1, p.47). The bid document also stated that:

Olympic education programs would help promote the Olympic spirit in China, especially among the 400 million youths and teenagers, through media coverage, school education and the Olympic Torch Relay. Chinese people were encouraged to live up to the theme of “I participate, I contribute, I enjoy”, and to be actively involved in the bidding and staging of the Beijing Olympic Games to make it one with the greatest number of participants in the Olympic history (Bid documents and analysis: Passion behind the bid, p.24).

It was a bold commitment in many respects. First, Olympic Games and OE were fairly new terms to almost all Chinese people, and the level of public knowledge of what the Olympic Games are was relatively low. Second, infrastructure, facilities, teachers and other resources in the educational setting are very unevenly distributed throughout the country. There is a huge gap between East and West China, urban and rural areas as well as big and small cities. Moreover, neither unified model nor referential experiences were available regarding implementing OE programs nationwide. Also, speculation arose among Chinese scholars with respect to whether China should, and to what extent the Chinese could, assimilate the West-based ideology of Olympism and make it as their own. To be sure, other Asian organizing committees, such as Tokyo 1964, Seoul 1988 and Nagano 1998 all made huge efforts to promote OE and organized big featured projects (Brownell, 2009); however, there
was no single ready-made Eastern model for Beijing to copy. Last, there didn’t appear to be a transparent monitoring and evaluation system to take such a commitment into participatory action, or to ensure the astronomical 400-million promised learners actually gained OE. Therefore, to achieve such a goal was no easy task. However, BOCOG and the Chinese government seemed to take this commitment very seriously. With huge amounts of money and human resources invested, a nationwide OE project was launched. Moreover, the enormous passion to host the Olympic Games for the first time, the ever thriving patriotism and nationalism during the prelude to the Olympic Games, the eagerness to build a new international image, and a centralized governing system all provided possibilities and feasibilities for the realization of OE on a national scale.

4.1.2. To Popularize Olympic Knowledge and Spirits

As discussed in previous chapters, the knowledge-oriented approach to OE has been the most commonly adopted by Olympic host countries. It focuses on giving people a basic understanding of the Olympic-related knowledge (e.g., the origin, facts, dates, sports events, traditions, etc) and the spirit and ideals that the Olympic Movement highly advocates. Accordingly, both BOCOG and the Beijing Olympic Education Standing Office considered Olympic knowledge education as a primary task and aimed to spread Olympic knowledge and spirit within and outside of local schools. I had a discussion with a foreign university professor, Dr. Thomas\textsuperscript{10}, who has rich experience in doing research in China and had been heavily involved within Beijing’s OE project, about the necessity of launching OE programs on such a large scale, in which she stated:

Dr. Thomas: This is not necessary in Western countries that have already hosted that many Olympic Games. Like in the West, we grew up with that history; it is part of our national history. We don’t need, you know, we grow up hearing stories from our

\textsuperscript{10} Although this interviewee gave me permission to use her real name for the purpose of this thesis, I have substituted pseudonyms to protect the participant’s confidentiality.
parents about Olympics, see it on TV, it is in our history books, so it’s just something we absorb from our environment.

Unlike the West, however, due to the long-term fight for the legitimate representation in the IOC between the People’s Republic of China and Taiwan, China\textsuperscript{11} was estranged from the modern Olympic history until the 1980s. Before Beijing won the bid to host the 2008 Olympic Games in 2001, the Chinese public had been very little exposed to the modern Olympic Movement. In schools, students read about the 1971 Ping Pong Diplomacy and the first gold medal that a Chinese ever won in the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games in history books, but that is all. As PE teacher Mr. Zhang\textsuperscript{12} said:

Mr. Zhang: I’ve been working as a PE teacher for more than 20 years, but before I got involved with Olympic education, I only remembered watching the opening ceremony of the 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games on a black and white TV; I remember the bugler sounded the trumpet but that was vague. Maybe I also watched some sporting events? I don’t know. Nobody ever taught me what the Olympics are when I was in PE normal university, I didn’t know who Coubertin was, and I and my colleagues rarely discussed the Olympics during work.

As shown in the above quotes, the Olympic Movement was a whole new concept to China, and the level of Olympic-related knowledge was low even within people who work closely to PE. Therefore, educating Chinese students about the basic knowledge of the Olympic Movement was critically important. As Dr. Thomas further elaborated:

Dr. Thomas: One of the main purposes of it was just to teach people what the Olympic Games are. I mean many of the teachers told me that before Olympic education, they

\textsuperscript{11} China in this thesis refers to the People’s Republic of China, founded in October 1949 and with the Communist Party in power.

\textsuperscript{12} Although this interviewee gave me permission to use his real name for the purpose of this thesis, I have substituted pseudonyms to protect the participant’s confidentiality.
didn’t even know the difference between the mathematics Olympics and the real Olympic Games. So the level of knowledge of what the Olympic Games are was really low. So part of what happened was, you know, just basic education about what it is.

In this sense, implementing a nation-wide OE project came out of the urgent need to educate people about what the Olympics actually are. Teaching and learning about Olympic-related knowledge may not be the ultimate goal for OE to achieve, but it is definitely an important first step. Being a part of the national Olympic hype legitimized Olympism as a viable educational tool in China and provided the students with an eye-opening opportunity to learn and experience a real international event.

4.1.3. To Reform Physical Education

This section drew narratives from one primary and one junior high school PE teacher, Mr. Zhang and Mr. Wang, who were both frustrated with the problematic condition of PE and were both seeking ways to reform. Although PE is stipulated as a mandatory part of the current Chinese education system, realistically, it has not been taken seriously compared to academic and professional education. There is a Chinese stereotype that a strong body links with a simple mind, especially among intellectuals. Athletes have constantly been described in a popular yet sarcastic phrase as people with four strong limbs and slow brains. Thus, PE and sporting activities are frequently considered unimportant and negligible. A general frustration for the two PE teachers was that students gradually lost the real joy from participating in physical activities and play. Most national and provincial policies regarding PE focused on mandate, instead of education, and some of the policies included graduation requirements stipulating that students needed to take part in and pass certain PE tests before approaching junior high, high school and college. Moreover, there is an obvious disconnection between the expectation of cultivating a healthy and happy generation and the realities in schools. As the PE teachers explained:
Mr. Zhang: I am a primary school PE teacher, not a professional coach. I may never be able turn one of my students into an Olympic medalist, but that doesn’t mean my students cannot enjoy PE nor have fun in my classes…. I feel like current physical education in China was still largely influenced by the USSR tradition, very rigid and formative, largely focusing on group cohesion and discipline. My students won the first place in the inter-district radio broadcasting gymnastics competitions\textsuperscript{13} four times in a row. We used to spend months practicing until every kid had the same gesture, and no matter which angle you observed from, there was always a straight line. I feel like I was training soldiers, not students. I got compliments from the principal, but I’m not happy about it. I saw the same mould, same move time and time again but what I couldn’t see was the personality behind each student. I’m not sure whether this was for the best of the students.

Mr. Wang: PE in junior high is very much exam-oriented. The test score you get in Grade 9 would be accumulated into the total score students achieve in the high school entrance exam. So of course, it’s not about whether you like it or not, they have to pass and they need a good mark. You don’t want to be like good at math and English but PE drags your average down. So I train them, and they practice the same routine almost every class for three years until they go to senior high.

Fisher: Do the students like it?

Mr. Wang: What do you say, how could they like it? They spend their only outdoor time in school running in circles, practicing basketball skills and learning to throw some balls. It bores me to be honest. What can we do? The policy is up there…. Sometimes

\textsuperscript{13} Broadcast gymnastic involves performing a set of moderate intensity aerobic exercises while following broadcasted instructions and music. It is mandatory for public school students to perform it together during recess everyday in China. During broadcast gymnastic competitions, a group of students will perform it together and they will be evaluated based on the rhythm, uniformity, and quality of their movements.
some students would say they are sick, but I could tell they were just shamming. I’m not even sure whether I should be mad or not, I feel sorry for my students.

Moreover, there have been an increasing number of accidents regarding students’ safety within PE classes in primary and secondary schools. Various media reports about students encountering abrasive injuries, musculoskeletal injuries, and even sudden death because of their misuse of sporting equipment and/or the lack of supervision. This has caused not only irreparable pain and loss for the students’ families, but also triggered panic on a large scale in the school boards and the related education departments. Some parents protest against the schools and even sue for monetary compensation. Schools have therefore paid great attention to the students’ safety and advertised it as top priority in PE classes. Accordingly, it has placed a large amount of pressure on PE teachers because they would be taking full responsibility for those accidents. PE teachers would therefore become reluctant to engage students in vigorous physical activities for fear of being hassled and the aforementioned legal liabilities. As Mr. Wang said:

Mr. Wang: We were mandated to keep the students safe in class under whatever circumstances. Of course this is part of our responsibilities as PE teachers, but sometimes accidents happen; there’s nothing we can foresee and control at some point. But because of the “zero-accident policy”, we’d rather play safe. Well the easiest way is simply prevent students from moving. Some of my colleagues even ban the students from using the monkey bar, well you know, just to be safe.

In addition, poor sporting equipment contributes another reason for the abovementioned problem. As Mr. Zhang contended:

Mr. Zhang: Some [equipment] are old and lack maintenance. Most importantly, some equipment per se are not safe, you know, we’ve got shot, discus, javelin, vaulting horse, stuff like that in storage, but realistically, what would primary school students do with
that?... I want all my students to have the opportunity to use the equipment, but that’s not likely going to happen, because those equipments were not made for them in the first place; they were made for athletes….I want my students to be the participants in sports, not spectators.

The problematic situation of PE has rung the alarm and motivated people to seek ways to change. OE legitimized the role of PE during a certain period of time and called for all-round development of students. It also resulted in an upsurge in schools making their own safe equipment out of readily available materials such as plastic bottles, which made the equipment accessible to the student body and diversified the content of PE classes. It was also believed to have significantly reduced the possibility of accidents. Therefore, implementing OE had the potential to fix the deficiencies of current PE and coincide with the desire to reform PE at schools; it was very much welcomed and advocated by the teachers.

4.1.4. To Foster Internationalism

One of the main themes that OE highly advocates is international education. Other than traditional education that is usually subjected to achieving certain goals for certain nations, OE emerges in the vacancy of a global education and its development complies with the trend of internationalization and globalization. As the Literature Reviews on The Context of Olympic Education point out, “Olympic education aims to cultivate qualified citizens of the ‘global village,’ to help them break through the various limitations of their respective societies, to impress the seal of a world citizen on top of the existing identity of a national citizen” (Ren, 2009, p.47). Therefore, for a country like China that has been estranged from the outside world for such a long time, hosting the Olympic Games and, especially, promoting OE nationwide, provided a unique opportunity to bring the world closer to China and vice versa.
Dr. Thomas: I think like before the Games, there was a lot of talking about being integrated into the international community and all this. Most Chinese people were just still pretty isolated from the outside world; they didn’t speak any English and they couldn’t imagine themselves, you know, meeting a foreigner and talking to a foreigner…. [Olympic education] would help create an image of the global community…. Make Chinese students feel more like China is a part of the world and imagine that they would be meeting foreigners in the future, so they had better learn English or a foreign language.

Beijing has grown into an international metropolis during recent decades. Aside from the exchanges on the political and economic level, the city also possesses a large number of cultural and educational communications programs regarding foreign affairs. As a Chinese government employee in the Education Commission, Mr. Li, said:

Mr. Li: We did a survey about the inter-school communication programs that engaged foreign countries in the past 50 years, and the result showed that more than 200 schools at all levels in Beijing hosted partnership relations with a foreign counterpart. They send students to visit China, stay for a few days, sometimes longer, and we send students over. There are a lot of international friends in Beijing and it’s not something new for some of the local students.

Fisher: Then what makes the OE programs different from those exchange programs?

Mr. Li: The number of countries that were involved, I think. During previous programs, the 200 plus schools only paired with 25 countries. In average it’s like 10 schools came down to one country. Moreover, those 25 countries were mostly developed countries that can be frequently seen or heard in the media, such as the US, Canada, the UK, Japan, and etc. However, what the Olympic family has to offer is more than 200
countries, 205 to be specific. If our schools could pair with every one of them, you know, it is a huge impact for everyone.

It was within this new framework that OE blazed new trails in reforming the content and pedagogy of traditional education. Students would learn from real-life activities, instead of cramming for exams, so they got the opportunity to feel and experience. Mr. Li further stated:

Mr. Li: This is not like students learning from a social science class that there are 225 countries and regions all over the world; this is genuine experience. It could widen their views, teach the students about the diversity of global culture and the ability to tolerate difference. When facing different cultures, the students can act like, you know, like we Chinese used to say, to be neither overbearing, nor servile.

To this end, it is obvious that traditional and international education should share equal importance in China. OE was not exclusive to international education, but with its universal humanistic values, it certainly had the potential to bring new ideas and facilitate pedagogical reform. Starting to engage in the global community was a step, and it would certainly be a critical step for the betterment of Chinese students in the long run.

4.2 Promoting Olympic Education in Schools

The OE project in China was conducted in correspondence to one of the three main themes of the Beijing Olympic Games—the “People’s Olympics” (the other two are the “Green Olympics” and the “High-tech Olympics”). Coincidentally, OE practice was also initiated by the people. In fact, grass-root efforts to promote OE in Beijing’s local schools started way earlier than the official implementation. This section discusses Beijing’s OE project from
two aspects: the official OE programs and OE activities carried out by a volunteer group at the grass-root level.

4.2.1. Government Sponsored Olympic Education programs

Organization

The OE official endeavor refers to programs planned, enforced and sponsored by the government. A project named *Beijing School Olympic Education Action Plan* was launched in December 2005 by the Beijing Municipal Education Commission, which initiated the official OE campaign. Related institutions were established later in succession to cooperate with the Communication Department of BOCOG, taking the responsibility to plan and implement OE programs in schools, from elementary schools all the way to universities. The organizational system of the official programs is summarized in table 2.\(^\text{14}\)

As shown in the table, OE was implemented under a top-down mechanism with the collaborative leadership of BOCOG, the Chinese Ministry of Education and Beijing Municipal Government. Other than the Communication Department which was attached to BOCOG, it is obvious that the government and governmental organizations played a key role in supporting and implementing OE in this system. As Dr. Thomas put it:

Dr. Thomas: You could hardly do it in another country because there’s such a centralized system in China that they were able to disseminate it quickly throughout Beijing and actually throughout much of the country. Like in the US, education is not administrated at the central government level; it is administrated at the state level. So maybe if you're lucky, you can get an Olympic education program going in the state. Like the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, they had one in the state of Georgia. There’s no way

\(^{14}\) The original table was written in Mandarin Chinese and was translated verbatim by the author into English.
you could implement one nationwide. We don’t have the government mechanism to do it.

Table 2. Organizational System of Beijing Olympic Education Project

(Geng, Ren, Zhang & Guo et al, 2009, p.101)

This organization framework was established in accord with China’s political and societal condition. Power is mostly centralized to the government and disseminated usually through administrative orders. The development of Non-government Organizations (NGOs) and other grass-root institutions is still in its infancy; their implementation capacity is therefore feeble.
Mr. Li: Governmental administration is extremely powerful in China. Although something may seem insignificant and impossible, it can become do-able with support from the top. Solely relying on NGOs and individual efforts to achieve something on a big scale is unrealistic. Implementing OE in schools fulfills China’s commitment to the world and conforms to the government’s need—this is part of what makes it all possible.

Therefore, as OE aimed to educate the youngsters, especially the 2 million students in Beijing’s schools, it is beyond BOCOG’s capacity to engage and mobilize students into OE programs on such a large scale without the government. It is also noticeable that the government did not just order the schools to implement OE; they also provided guidance, funding and personnel support.

**Implementation**

The Beijing Olympic Education Standing Office was established in affiliation with the Beijing Municipal Education Commission in 2006, with six educational goals:

Olympic education aims to cultivate the comprehensive quality of youth, promote physical education and sports among primary and secondary school students, spread Olympic spirit and the spirit of internationalism and patriotism, strengthen the thought and moral education for non-adults, strive to create a good humanistic atmosphere for the successful hosting of the Beijing Olympics and shape a legacy of Olympic education with Chinese characteristics.


The Standing Office was primarily in charge of the detailed work of planning, organizing and implementing OE in schools before and during the Olympic Games. Specifically, several programs were launched including the Olympic Education Model School, Heart-to-Heart
Sister School Program, Olympic Volunteer Education and Olympic for All. These programs were not separated; instead, they were variously integrated and incorporated into formal curriculum studies and educational activities at local schools. Also, an OE research and training program for university professors and teachers was established with the aim of fostering talented OE intellectuals and facilitating OE activities.

A series of *Olympic Readers* for primary, junior high, high school and university students was compiled, published and distributed to Beijing’s schools at all levels, which primarily covers Olympic-related knowledge, pictures, stories and activities. The Beijing Municipal Education Commission also required local schools to spend 80 minutes per week to study the distributed material. As Mr. Li says:

Mr. Li: Imagine the students, even teachers who know nothing about the Olympic Games, how can they engage in OE themed activities? I didn’t know much either to be honest. We did a lot of research prior to compiling the *Olympic Reader*; Greece and Canada did a fabulous job in designing the *Olympic Readers* and we learned from them…. Studying the *Olympic Readers* is the prerequisite of implementing the actual OE program. They are like textbooks, to make the students aware of what the Olympics is, when it started, who Coubertin is and what the Olympic spirit are, etc. Well, to let them know what is going to happen in their home city. To be sure, teaching about knowledge is always the easiest part in education, but the *Olympic Readers* definitely laid the foundation for the students to participate and engage in OE activities. They should first learn about it from the *Readers* and then get the chance to experience the Olympics in the activities that followed.

*Official Olympic Education Programs*

One significant feature of the government-sponsored OE project was the creativity and diversity of programs carried out in different OE model schools. Since there was no unified
requirement or standard to follow with regard to the specific content, formality or the extent to which OE should be conducted, it actually allowed more freedom to individual schools and therefore, more creativity was stimulated. Teachers and students were also encouraged to exercise such creativities and design activities of their own. Upon being nominated as OE model schools, the 556 schools took the initiatives to conduct OE activities and disseminate Olympic spirits. For example, Hua Jiadi Primary School in Beijing established a mini BOCOG of the students to mimic the IOC’s practice. Students gave election speeches in order to work under eight departments within the mini BOCOG (Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Vol.2). The aim was to familiarize the students with Olympic knowledge as well as foster their senses of responsibility. As Dr. Thomas explains:

Dr. Thomas: Well if you look at Olympic education in previous host countries, they each tailored it in a different way. In the US, the USOC doesn’t pay much attention to Olympic education. The main thing are just winning gold medals and getting corporate sponsorships. Olympic education in the recent past was also kind of highly commercialized….In Germany, the main theme for a long time was fair play….There was a program, I think that was in all of the schools nationwide, but it’s still only, I don’t know, couple of hours a year or something, very small…. But in those countries you’re talking about rather simple programs. They publish a few books, and you know, all they do is publish a few books. There’s no effort to promote it in the schools. So what China was doing in association with the Beijing Olympic Games was huge, so you cannot, there wasn’t really any one theme or one thing, because every school was doing something different.

Another official featured program of Beijing’s OE was the Heart-to-Heart Sister School program, which was launched on December 17, 2006, by BOCOG and the Beijing Municipal Education Commission. The program was inspired by the One School, One Country program in the 1988 Nagano Winter Olympic Games and helped to partner more than 200 primary and secondary schools in Beijing with 205 corresponding schools.
introduced by local NOCs in the Olympic family (*Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games, Vol.2*). The students would learn the language, history and culture of the partner countries, greet the partner delegation at the Olympic Village and cheer for them in the sporting competition with the goal of achieving the Olympic spirit of friendship and mutual understanding. During this process, although BOCOG and overseas Chinese embassies had assisted the schools in contacting their corresponding NOCs, the students and parents also played a critical role in the success of establishing all 205 partnerships:

Mr. Li: Basically, you can say the Heart-to-Heart program would not have been completed without the effort of the schools, students and their parents. Literally they tried every single way they could possibly think of to get in touch with the partner countries, such as seeking help from international students in Beijing, contacting embassies in Beijing, using personal relationships, etc…. The amazing part of the Heart-to-Heart program was it reached all 205 countries, you know, some small and remote countries, the Pacific Islands Countries, certain countries in Africa and South America, that we barely hear about were extremely difficult to contact, not to mention to build up partnership relations for the Olympics…. For example, Palau, an island country in the Pacific Island area which even has diplomatic relations with Taiwan, not with us. However, one of the students’ parent works in a petroleum company there. So this student’s parent did all the work, hundreds of calls, emails, and even visited their government before finally getting partnered with one of their schools…. Numerous stories like this.

Meanwhile, the Heart-to-Heart program was believed to achieve a big step in promoting international education by building up a cultural bridge between Beijing’s schools and their foreign counterparts. After the partnership had been established, there were foreign students coming to visit schools in Beijing; various Olympic-themed activities were held and these activities were warmly welcomed by both local and foreign students. As a primary school PE teacher recalled:
Mr. Zhang: My school was partnered with Germany. A group of about 20 German primary school students came to our school with their vice principal, two other teachers and an interpreter. We prepared for a long time to welcome them. Our students did their own research about some German traditions. We used our Olympic Garden to hold a German beer festival, well the students didn’t drink real beer, tea instead [laughter]. Our students toured them around the Olympic Corridor, introduced them with Olympic knowledge in English….They participated in two of my PE classes that day; I taught them some traditional Chinese sports, like kicking shuttlecock, playing diabolo and spinning top. Our students also demonstrated how to use and play with the soft [sport] equipment that we made in class, such as the paper balls, javelin made of plastic bottles and the foam hurdles…. The German students were amazed so were their teachers! I heard their vice principal used to be a soccer star in Germany before and he is really into sports, and we had lovely conversations…. I think they felt welcomed and had a great time.

To sum up, because of the nationwide OE system led by BOCOG and the government as well as the collaborative effort of teachers, students and parents, various OE programs were implemented and promoted in Beijing’s local schools. The school-based programs energized the students and brought them opportunities to experience new knowledge and pedagogy. It surely had achieved some significance. Influences that the official OE program exerted on students will be discussed in detail in the following sections.

4.2.2. Olympic Education on the Grass-root Level

Theoretically, China’s OE history can be traced to as early as 1993, when Beijing first bid to hold the 2000 Olympic Games. A college level textbook entitled Olympic Movement was published, which initiated Olympic documentation in China. With the city losing the bid, the textbook was never employed in the school curriculum. However, OE activities did not wait until 2005 to commence. Instead, OE practice in schools was pioneered by civilian efforts.
After Beijing’s successful bid in 2001 to host the Olympic Games, a grass-root OE promoting team initiated OE practice in schools. The team was founded and led by a Western-trained university professor, Prof. Zhao, and was made up of approximately 20 people, including university professors, PE teachers, students and citizen volunteers. Since Prof. Zhao had worked as a PE teacher for ten years before going to a foreign university to study the Olympics, he felt that OE was capable of shaking up the original PE and bringing new ideas into Chinese schools. Thus, he decided to spread Olympic knowledge and Olympic values, starting from primary and secondary schools in Beijing. In my first interview with Prof. Zhao, he told me that originally, he designed 138 foam-board posters which presented knowledge of Olympic history, philosophy, and more than one thousand pictures. With funds from China Petroleum, Prof. Zhao conducted an Olympic knowledge exhibition tour to ten universities and more than one hundred communities in Beijing and a few Olympic co-host cities. Throughout the exhibition tour, he found most Chinese people and school children were very unfamiliar with the Olympic Games. To be sure, there were many difficult times during this genesis:

Prof. Zhao: The tour didn’t go perfectly well, not many showed up actually. Some people knew that we were going to be holding the Olympic Games in 2008 but they didn’t know exactly what the Olympics were. I visited a lot of primary and secondary schools and tried to tell them about Olympic education and Olympism. Most teachers looked at me with wonder in their eyes, kind of like wondering who was this guy and why was he doing this? Some even mocked me and thought I was crazy!... I talked to some school principals and showed them my educational plan, and they would wonder what OE had to do with their schools…. I was given many, many cold-shoulders.

Although this interviewee also gave me permission to use his real name for the purpose of this thesis, I have substituted pseudonyms to protect the participant’s confidentiality.
However frustrating these experiences were, Prof. Zhao did not give up. Fortunately and finally, he ran into Mr. Zhang, the confused yet open-minded PE teacher. With similar experiences and frustrations about PE in schools, the two of them chimed in almost immediately. Prof. Zhao started to introduce Olympism to Mr. Zhang, but for Mr. Zhang, the term Olympics was still fairly unfamiliar:

Mr. Zhang: Back in 2001, Beijing just won the bid. I knew the Olympic Games were about sporting competitions but merely nothing else; I was confused. Zhao started to explain about the origin, history, development [of the Olympic Games]…. It was difficult, unlike right now, you just type your questions into a searching engine and millions answers would pop up. I only had dial-up internet connection at home at the time, there was no library at my school and very few books about the Olympics were available in the market. Basically I had no where to turn to but Zhao…. But I was attracted by the idea that Olympics could be employed as a way to reform PE and teach values, and I was so inspired when he told me about the mock ancient Olympic Games he experienced in Greece. It was at that time we started to think about having one of our own.

With this idea in mind, Prof. Zhao and Mr. Zhang decided to hold a mini Olympic Games at Zhang’s primary school. The blueprint was to bring the Olympics closer to the children by offering them a platform to participate and experience the Olympics, with sports providing the means. Nonetheless, this proposition did not proceed as well as planned. According to Zhao and Zhang, major resistance came from inadequate financial backup, lack of authoritative support and limited social recognition:

Prof. Zhao: I was aware that what all we had were an idea and access to the students. We needed some kind of permission from the school authority, like the school principal…. He was not accepting it which I understood. When something has become a common practice and this practice gradually grows into a general trend, most people
tend to follow it instead of thinking out of the box. The educational system was there and no one wanted to be the “guinea pig”…. It took a lot of persuasion and the principal finally ended up with some kind of acquiescence.

Mr. Zhang: I talked to every one of my colleagues about this idea, you know like what the Olympics are, why hosting this mini Olympic Games was beneficial and meaningful, stuff like that. But literally, I was like a preacher talking to a bunch of atheists! People pumped me with all kinds of excuses—why are you doing this? Nobody asks you to do this? There has been nobody doing something like this? What do you do this for?... They thought I was brain-washed, and you know what some of them called me?—psychopath!... I applied to the director of PE office at my school for 500 RMB [about $ 70] in the name of a regular annual sporting meeting, but even that I got a NO, because he knew it’s going to be a mini Olympic Games.

In situations like this, it was understandable why the principal was conservative and the teachers whom Mr. Zhang worked with did not bother to care. The general knowledge level of the Olympic Games was very low. People could not see the future benefit of any kind without previous experience and would be too reluctant to get engaged. Also, Zhao and Zhang would certainly not get credit from doing it. However, it was on May 10th 2002 that the first mini Olympic Games opened at Mr. Zhang’s primary school, which marked the first ever school-based OE trial in China.

Unofficial Olympic Education Programs

The OE programs designed and led by Prof. Zhao and Mr. Zhang consisted of a series of Olympic related activities. First, the school’s annual sport meeting was replaced by a mini Olympic Games in 2002, with a mock opening ceremony and several sporting events included. Students were encouraged to make togas themselves to represent different countries, and they marched into the stadium, shouting “One World, One Dream” in their
representative country’s language. The torch bearer, wearing feather wings and dressed up in white, ran onto the track, with a plastic torch in his hand, and lit the torch stand which was made of flame colored cloth blown upward with a fan. In order to make the mini Olympic Games more authentic, the sporting competitions that followed were mostly pentathlon events except for wrestling. Children were encouraged to work as hard as they could to strive for self-improvement and champions were crowned with an olive-branch wreath. For those who lost in the sport competitions or who were not physically active, the mini Olympic Games also organized less competitive physical activities, such as rope skipping and kangaroo jumping, to make sure every child got to participate. Prizes were also offered in these activities. As Mr. Zhang recalled:

Mr. Zhang: I could say it went perfectly well. I remembered it vividly that students from Grade 3 to 6, all together 852 of them took part in the activity. Those who were injured or sick also joined the cheerleading squad. Literally every one of the students participated…. Prof. Zhao and I designed a certificate for this event and every student got one in the end. I wanted them to remember and to feel like they used to be part of the Olympics, as participants, not as spectators…. The whole event lasted for more than half day and there was no closing ceremony. Surprisingly, the principal offered to address the mini Olympic Games after the award ceremony, I think he was amazed.

With this initial success, the mini Olympic Games gradually won some recognition and support from the school board. In the following years, more nuanced concepts and elements were added to the mini Olympic Games and this activity reached its peak in 2007 and 2008. It also became an annual tradition of the school, with the most recent one being held in June 2012.

The second program that the school initiated was an Olympic Angel Chorus. Children selected for the chorus would wear artificial angel wings and sing Olympic themed songs. I observed one of their music classes in 2007, in which the music teacher translated the
ancient Greek philosophy into vivid stories by telling the students that only those with beautiful minds in healthy and strong bodies would be selected as angels, while people with sick bodies were considered as barbarians. The idea of an Olympic angel was first designed by Prof. Zhao. It was the winged goddess Nike—the goddess of victory in ancient Greek mythology—that inspired him. He then applied this concept into OE activities and reinterpreted it in a Chinese way. This was one of the many instances that OE became “glocalized.” As Dr. Thomas explained:

Dr. Thomas: They took a basically Western ideology and they made it their own. So by the time the key concepts of Olympism made into the schools, they were very much changed. For me the best example was the Olympic angel [laughter]. It was totally funny for me, because in the West, angel is a Christian symbol….But I though that was just a wonderful little invention. You couldn’t do it in the West because it would symbolize Christianity. People wouldn’t think about the winged goddess of victory, so you wouldn’t want to associate it with the Olympic Games.

The local understanding of the Olympic angels, however, had nothing do with the Western Christianity or even the classic Greek goddess. For Mr. Zhang and other teachers who constantly employed this idea in their educational program, angels symbolized beauty, purity, dignity and any noble concepts that can be envisioned:

Mr. Zhang: I don’t know much about the religious origin of angels. It’s just when I think of angels, they are just those mysterious, kind and beautiful figures that everyone would look forward to…. I think this is such a wonderful concept and I want my students to become angels.

Mr. Wang: For me angels imply health and freedom. They have wings, they can fly. Any flying animal has strong muscle and skeleton…. I want to portray such an image to my students through angels.
The Olympic angel concept gradually spread among the school’s other activities and was attached with new meanings. Many student organizations changed their names, such as the angel reporter station and the angel broadcasting station. This might have strayed away from the original symbolization, but it appeared to be very attractive and educative to the students. Moreover, the school took a further step by sending the Olympic Angel Chorus to some primary schools located in the rural and mountain areas near Beijing. The city students in the chorus taught their rural counterparts to sing Olympic songs, played Chinese traditional sports and shared their experiences within OE programs. This kind of exchange activity functioned as a radiating effect to spread Olympic spirit and values.

Last but not least, Olympic themes were incorporated into the formal school curriculum as part of the fulfillments for the comprehensive and practical education. In PE classes, Mr. Zhang asked his students to collect waste paper, foam, and plastic bottles and he guided them to make sport equipment, such as soccer ball, discus, hurdles, etc. Putting it all together, they named it “soft sport equipment.” As Mr. Zhang described in his interview:

Mr. Zhang: Originally, this idea came from my frustration about the lack of proper sporting equipment. You surely couldn’t let the 9 year old to throw some shots…. At that time the International Track and Field Association (IAAF) was advocating the idea of fun track and field and tried to spread this idea among East Asia areas. I saw their sporting equipment on TV, and they were like plastic hurdles and stuff. I was impressed yet I’m aware that there’s no way I could possibly access that equipment and use it in my class. An idea suddenly occurred—why don’t’ we make our own?

In this case, students would not need to receive a large amount of training in order to engage in sports. Also, it is a win-win situation— the soft equipment largely reduced children’s vulnerabilities when playing with regular sports equipments and it was a good way to raise the students’ awareness of environmental protection. Moreover, students were encouraged to make Olympic knowledge boards and posters, and all of these creations were presented in
their “Olympic Knowledge Corridor” located in the middle of the campus. They planted trees in their Olympic Garden, used the traditional Chinese art of paper cutting to create Fuwa mascot images in craft classes, delivered Olympic themed speeches in English classes, and much more.

OE practice initiated a new form of education by allowing students to experience and encouraged them to be creative. They got opportunities to participate, present and make decisions to engage in activities they found interesting. These OE programs were believed to be warmly welcomed by students, teachers and parents. The school was nominated as an OE Model School in 2005 by BOCOG; it was from that point on that OE officially earned its full legitimacy in the school board and various supports started to fill in. The OE project reached its peak during this overlapping period and the school earned broad recognition and wide-spread reputation.

4.3. Necessities and Limitations of the Collaborative Relationship

4.3.1 The Interdependent Relation between Government and People

As discussed in the previous section, the implementation of OE activities was built on a collaborative endeavor consisting of both the grass-root initiatives and the official efforts. The people’s pioneering attempts established a preliminary model of OE practice in schools and this model was adopted by many schools in later years’ OE activities. According to Mr. Li, the education official who was in charge of compiling the OE Readers and planning OE programs, the grass-root effort of implementing OE functioned as a valuable template:

Mr. Li: I’ve been doing educational work for almost my entire life but Olympic education was a fairly new concept for me, to be honest. Like other research projects, my colleagues and I did numerous literature reviews and started to have some sense of
it; that was still on a theoretical level though. But I was browsing the internet the other
day trying to search more information about Olympic education, and Yang Fangdian
Central Primary School and their Olympic education activities caught my attention…. A
crew of 80 including deputies from Beijing’s 18 districts and counties visited the school
several days later, and for me, that was such an inspirational visit.

Likewise, after 2005, Prof. Zhao was recruited by the Olympic Education Expert team and
had increasingly got involved into the official OE programs. Mr. Zhang was also constantly
invited to hundreds of schools to share his experience of implementing OE. However, there
was also a consensus that OE in China would never have reached such an extensive scale
without multiple supports from the government. The influences that China’s political and
cultural uniqueness exerted on planning and implementation of OE are difficult to tease
apart. As a one-Party country, while most power is centralized to the government,
administrative orders are issued from the top and passed down through different hierarchical
levels. To put it in another way, only the government possesses enough power and influence
to mobilize people from various circles of the society. As three of my interviewees pointed
out—this is the Chinese way. Specifically, Prof. Zhao said:

Prof. Zhao: Realistically, there’s no chance for OE to spread to the city of Beijing and
throughout the whole country without the government’s support. As intellectuals, we
should understand the way how it works, and I don’t think it’s an entirely good or bad
thing.

In the case of OE, the sites to conduct OE programs were primary and secondary schools;
the central and local Education Commissions and departments would therefore become
major forces to mobilize school principals, teachers and students. The grass-root OE
activities interconnected with the government’s directive of conducting a nationwide OE
campaign in 2005, explained the prosperous period of OE in the years until the Olympic
Games concluded.
Another force that shaped this collaborative relation came from the contribution of the academic experts in Beijing, who essentially volunteered their time and provided their expertise in designing and conducting OE programs. As Dr. Thomas explained:

Dr. Thomas: That was something, as I understood, it was new. You know the Educational Commission officials do not normally cooperate so closely with the university professors. So it brought them closer together. I thought it was a great thing; it opened my eyes. Because intellectuals do not collaborate that closely with the government in the US, they also don’t collaborate that closely with Olympic organizing committees either. I mean that’s a whole other discussion because that’s part of the way our society is constructed. We are independent, you know, academics are very independent of the government…. I saw a really different kind of relationship between government and the academics in China and you know I think it comes from a civilizational tradition that is ancient and that is different from that in the West.

Correspondingly, the link between high level intellectuals and the government is a traditional convention in Chinese society and constitutes a solid backup for good governance. Therefore, the OE Expert Team functioned as an efficient tool in the multi-dimensional mechanism to support and supervise the OE project as a whole.

4.3.2. Administrative Orders versus Educational Nature

As presented in previous sections, the implementation of OE was a combined effort in China; it started from the grass-root level in 2001, struggled through the following four years before the government intervened in December 2005, developed fully, and peaked in 2007 and 2008. It is obvious that the end of 2005 was a watershed in the whole timeline, and administrative orders functioned as a very strong and indispensible driving force. PE teacher Mr. Zhang reflected on his experience of conducting OE and said:
Mr. Zhang: Upon being nominated as [Olympic education] model school, the school board organized several meetings instantly to discuss and plan Olympic education activities. The principal and directors suddenly became very enthusiastic…. Conducting Olympic education programs and stuff suddenly became extremely important, they suddenly “understood” the importance and necessity and I’m not a psychopath anymore [laughter], you know, it was all very sudden…. They would brag about our school’s history of conducting OE activities and even invite me to meetings to share thoughts…. If we take a glance back and compare with the difficult early stage of conducting OE before 2005, when there was no money, no support and hardly anybody understood, Mr. Zhang detected a huge change in many respects:

Mr. Zhang: It seems that Olympic education became the top priority among all school affairs that everything needed to make ways for. They [the school authority] would ask me to plan some activities…. The mini Olympic Games was very popular, I applied for money to buy clothes and equipment and it arrived right away. My colleagues offered to help and I’d always have someone to turn to when I came across technical problems….. Even students were permitted to miss class in order to rehearse the opening ceremony…. Olympics definitely became magic words that everyone wanted to be attached to.

These changes further ensured the successful implementation the OE project at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School. The school ended up receiving tremendous media coverage, financial revenues and government accolades from its OE activities. However, the reason behind this was also clear and easy to understand. It was and always had been the administrative orders that inspired the school authorities to conduct OE, not the students’ interest. As Prof. Zhao commented:
Prof. Zhao: OE after 2005 was largely “officialized”. All people were following orders from their superiors. Students followed the teachers’ instructions, the teachers followed the principal’s instructions, the principal followed the Education Commission’s instructions and they all pointed back to the government’s [administrative] orders. In this chain, the real participants of OE were at the bottom and were identified to be the least powerful…. They didn’t conduct OE in the sake of conducting OE; instead, they were merely following orders…..

As these orders were distributed, OE activities swept almost every school in the city of Beijing. What was perhaps similar to what happened at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School was people’s enthusiasm and the various, sometimes overwhelming, Olympic-themed activities. The essential education component, however, seemed to be sometimes missing in these repetitive activities. As Mr. Li stated:

Mr. Li: Sometimes it just feels like the schools were too eager to label anything with Olympic education. The volunteer activities were one of the typical examples. The schools mobilized students on the street to help direct traffic without considering their safety, and I wonder how the traffic police felt about that. Also they organized students to the senior centers to teach English [laughter]. Well it’s true that Beijing is a metropolis and it’d be good that all Beijing citizens would know some English, say some simple conversation for instance. But if I were one of the seniors, I’d rather they come and teach me some Tai Chi, at least that’d be useful to me…. I mean the whole point of volunteering is offer help to those in need, and I don’t see it’s that necessary for the seniors to learn English. I think the seniors are the real volunteers in this case; they volunteered their time to cooperate with the school, not the students. I’m not sure what the students can learn from these kinds of activities, I mean, they’re implementing activities for the sake of the activities, not educating the students.
The interviewees’ narratives helped to unpack the essential motivation of implementing OE in schools. To be sure, these activities bonded the students closer to the community and taught them the spirit of volunteering. However, the bigger picture was that they helped to showcase the school and enriched the reports that the schools handed in to their superiors. Instead of placing the students’ needs and interest at priority, some school authorities focused more on the by-product of OE activities, such as the media coverage, financial subsidy and the increasing ranking status that came along. They lost the opportunity to convey the genuine educational messages and this did not align with the original goals of conducting OE in schools.

4.3.3. Passion-driven Activity versus Educational Reform

In a perspective shared among some Chinese educators, Beijing’s OE programs were built upon China’s Suzhi Education, which literally means quality education. Originally, the expression “Suzhi Education” was raised in the Chinese National Education Working Conference in 1985, and it was officially promulgated in the Action Plan for Revitalizing Education for the 21st Century by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 1999 as a driving force to propelling China’s educational reform (Brownell, 2009). Upon being issued, this reforming policy swept Chinese schools at all levels at that time. The biggest influence upon students in the Suzhi Education reform was believed to lie in the promotion of a new kind of activity, “comprehensive practice activities”, which basically referred to activities held outside of the classroom, aimed to cultivate students’ manipulative abilities and creativities as well as to diversify students’ school lives. Likewise, with the similar goals to Suzhi Education, the question remains whether OE can be seen as a subsequent effort of educational reform. For Dr. Thomas, this connection was obvious:

Dr. Thomas: Well it was the main thing that the educational system has just been reformed to open it up and allowed a little bit more freedom to the schools, and the [Olympic Education Standing] Office intentionally tried to give them that freedom and
basically to stimulate various creativity and I think they did. So what was the main
effect of Olympic education, the bigger picture was to promote more creativity in the
school curriculum and stimulate, you know, the pro-activity of the teachers and seeking
out new material, being a little bit more open to variation in the curriculum diversity.

For Dr. Thomas, OE refueled the traditional education with sports and various activities and
substituted the old curriculum with interesting Olympic symbols and stories. Nevertheless,
Mr. Li offered a completely opposite point of view:

Mr. Li: The Olympic Games on the whole was a passion-driven showcasing activity, so
is Olympic education, it required a lot of passion and enthusiasm. The whole country
was exhilarated to host the Games, but this exhilaration couldn’t possibly last forever….Suzhi Education is about education but Olympic education was about the Olympics.
They are similar in goals but way different in nature. Therefore, there’s absolutely no
connection between the two, because fundamentally they are not even comparable.

Likewise, there was a lot of truth in Mr. Li’s comment. OE revolved around the Olympic
Games and the primary motivation of conducting OE was to fulfill one of the commitments
of hosting the Olympic Games, instead of reforming the educational system. Even though
there were some similarities concerning the educational goals and methods between the two,
the causality had predetermined the ultimate outcome of OE that would come and go with
the Olympic Games. Moreover, Mr. Wang, the junior high school PE teacher noted that
primary schools seemed to be more enthusiastic about the OE programs than their older
counterparts simply because they have more free time and less study load.

Mr. Wang: As the students approach higher grade, they tend to attend less
extra-curriculum activities, voluntarily or coerced, I don’t know. For example at my
school, grade 7 and 8 are sort of ok, but the school was reluctant to engage grade 9
students in Olympic education activities because they’ve got the high school entrance
exam coming along…. I’m not saying there was no passion in the school or among the students towards the Olympics, there was a lot of passion, it’s just when it comes to the high school entrance exam, Olympic education did not seem to be that critical to grade 9 students.

Similar kinds of problems also struck Suzhi Education as it started to show bureaucratic manifestations when students approached higher grades and faced excessive study loads as well as the pressure from the high school entrance examination in grade 9 and the college entrance examination three years later. The marks students get from the exams would be the sole determination of university entrance and were believed to be vitally influential to their future. It was also partially due to the fact that Chinese parents usually have control over their children’s decisions in schools and they always have higher expectations of their academic performances. Therefore, academic study is obviously dominating the school hierarchy and the students’ choice making. The diversified materials and renewed curriculum derived from either Suzhi Education or OE may have the power to alter the pathways in between but they are too weak to change the outcome. As long as the exams are still up there dominating the educational system, Suzhi Education would unfortunately turn into a disguised empty-rhetoric and OE would share the same destiny, and it lasted too briefly.

4.4. (Un)sustainable Educational Legacies—Post-Games Phenomenon

Previous researchers noted that compared to tangible legacies generated by mega events, the intangible legacies appear to be “less well understood, measured or defined” (Graver, Cammiss, Charlton, & Plantak, 2010, p.5), especially educational legacies. The concluding remarks of the Official Report of the Beijing 2008 Olympic Games (Vol.1, p.243) state that:

The Chinese government’s efforts in disseminating the spirit and ideals inherent to the Olympics among the 400 million Chinese youth proved to be significant and fruitful.
The nationwide Olympic education system and the spread of Olympic values will surely have a far-reaching impact.

On the contrary, Prof. Zhao and Mr. Zhang felt that based on their experiences of conducting OE during and after the Games, it was still too soon to jump to this conclusion. As Mr. Zhang said:

Mr. Zhang: If you still remember what my school looked like 4 years ago, you’d be very much shocked to see what it’s like now. It seems like nothing had ever happened. All the Olympic-themed decorations were gone! Those Olympic knowledge boards in the Olympic Corridor were gone; it’s actually called Art Corridor now. They tore down the Olympic Garden and turned the place into a bicycle shed. The equipment that we used to make and play with, the paper balls, the first torch we used in 2002, the hurdles and javelins, the trophies, everything in the exhibition window was gone except for three photos in the corner…. I was very disappointed, even a little bit outraged [with a helpless tone]. I wouldn’t take this personally but I could say they simply have no respect for history.

Mr. Zhang’s concern was echoed by Prof. Zhao who further noted that these problems did not just emerge after the Games but earlier. He believed that the OE project in China did not disappear because the Olympic Games were concluded; instead, it died out because people who implemented it did it with a wrong agenda and therefore in a wrong way:

Prof. Zhao: Well it’s true that Olympic education reached out to many schools and they had a handful of programs going on, but I think those programs were to a large extent “governmentalized”. Most schools did it because they were asked to, you know, they were nominated as [Olympic education] Model schools by the Education Commission, and they would have to do something to complete the report and meet the assessment criteria. Everybody had agendas in this whole project—teachers wanted to please the
principal, principals wanted to showcase their school and the Municipal Educational Commission wanted to impress their superiors…. It perfectly explains the difficult genesis and the “momentary victory” of conducting Olympic education activities…. For the majority of people, Olympic education just comes and goes with the administrative orders, not what the students need or what our educational system needs.

It seemed not only that OE programs gradually died out in Beijing’s schools after the 2008 Olympic Games concluded, but that there was also very limited academic research regarding the educational legacies of the nationwide OE campaign. To be sure, conducting OE in schools did not have the power to produce instant results, and the subtle influences that OE exerted on students might have to wait for years to manifest. Nevertheless, it surely refreshed China’s traditional education and proved to be highly educational. According to Mr. Li, the bi-annual reports that OE model schools submitted to the Education Commission showed that OE with its new content and pedagogy did energize the students; they were voluntarily engaging in various activities instead of being told or compelled to participate.

Mr. Li: In this sense, the educational legacies lay in the new concepts, impressive experiences and refreshed understandings that students generated from participating in Olympic education activities. I think these memories will be of some lasting influence to the students.

Moreover, receiving OE and being part of the Olympic family were believed to have shed some light on Chinese students and Chinese people regarding how they picture and situate themselves within the larger global community. As Dr. Thomas alluded:

Dr. Thomas: You know based on my own experience of 25 years coming to China, you just noticed the way people think and their reactions to you as a foreigner, you suddenly notice, even like me myself speaking Chinese, increasingly people take it, they are not so surprised anymore [laughter]!... One thing that was kinda amusing was during the
Olympic Games, a number of older people and taxi drivers started learning English. Okay though they would complain like I cannot remember it, I didn’t learn anything. But for me the more important point was that they thought they needed to know…. Just imagining themselves being closer to foreigners than they previously felt they were. Now I feel in China now, interactions between Chinese people and foreigners are normal, they are just more normal than they used to be…. I mean the Beijing Games did the same for the rest of the world, they now imagine that China was part of the world….

For Dr. Thomas, the main effect of the Olympic Games and OE programs was in the area of imagination; it was not the actual social effects, but rather it was about how it changed people’s thinking, and I firmly agree. However, the question remains, were these imaginations and memories worth the $100 million investment on OE and the national mobilization? About this, it may still be too soon to tell. OE might be a series of periodical activities during the Olympic Games, and to be honest and to be fair, there are not many OE programs that are sustainable. However, what should be affirmative was that the universal Olympic values, diversified material, experience-oriented pedagogy and the enriched curriculum that inherently incorporated within OE should not go with the Olympic Games. Moreover, since the failure to continue OE programs strikes almost every Olympic host city because most of the momentum of intangible legacies gets lost after the conclusion of the Olympic Games. There should be more effort to carry out OE programs in the post-Games era in order to achieve substantial legacies. It does not necessarily need to be carried out under the name of OE, nor does it have to be conducted with the same formality. However, some of the common goals were parallel to OE, including curriculum development, increasing participation in sports and physical activities, raising cultural and inter-cultural awareness, the establishment of voluntarism and so forth. These goals should never be wavered from and should be something that every teacher and education practitioner pursues.
Part Two. Individual Experiences with Olympic Education in Schools

This part draws narratives from the student participants (n=6) and unpacks their experiences of participating in various OE activities. A number of themes were generated when evoking the students’ memories with regard to the conceptualization of OE and the lasting influences that OE exerted upon them. The students also constantly drew connections between OE and traditional curriculum education in their day-to-day schooling and expressed hope to continue seeking for alternative possibilities of new materials and pedagogy. In the end, they offered feedback and advice on organizing and developing OE in general school settings.

4.5. Students’ General Frustration with Current Education System

Throughout the process of data collection, while the student population was interviewed about their experiences participating in OE, they constantly reflected back to the formal education they are currently embracing. One common notion generated from the students’ narratives was their frustration with the exam-oriented educational system and the feeble approach to the implementation of Suzhi Education reform. In China, holding a degree from a renowned institution will instantly make an individual more competitive in the eyes of the employers comparing to those who graduate from a mediocre university. Therefore, parents and teachers always remind the children about the importance of entering a top ranking university. Ever since the resumption of the college entrance examination in 1978, intellectual education immediately became the focal point due to the fact that post-secondary education entrance is almost entirely determined by the scores that students get in college entrance examinations. There is and has always been an over emphasis on written exams in Chinese schools at all levels. Since students spend more time studying for the exams, other aspects within formal education are inevitably downplayed, such as sports, physical and mental health, philanthropy, as well as development in social skills. Likewise, Suzhi Education reform was initiated in the 1990s with the goal to lighten the students’ course
load so that they would have more time to engage in other activities and achieve personal development in the aforementioned attributes. However the actual outcome that Suzhi Education has achieved so far is debatable because the national university entrance examination is still the ultimate determinant. For the students, there is no incentive to do things other than studying under the pressure caused by the exams. The study burden usually emerges in grade 7 when students enter junior high and will enormously increase as they approach higher grades. High school entrance exams are also strongly emphasized because the level and quality of high school education significantly varies among different high schools in the city of Beijing and will ultimately have tremendous influence on university entrance. Therefore, students in secondary and high schools are under excessive study load from multiple academic disciplines. As Helen complained:

Helen: It’s all about study, study and study, like a rotation, you know, classes, homework, and exams; this routine never changes! When finally weekends arrive and I have to go to cram schools for extra tutoring.

Fisher: Why do you have to go to cram schools during weekends?

Helen: Who doesn’t? I mean everybody goes. It’s the only way to keep you in line with the peers.

Another student James argued education in junior high was redundant and unpractical. He said:

James: Chinese, English, math, physics, chemistry, politics, history… Gosh, there’re so many! 9 subjects in total that would be examined plus PE, music, fine art, computer science and others, isn’t this too much for grade 8? I don’t understand why we have to

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16 There are several kinds of secondary schools in the Chinese education system primarily including normal high schools, international schools and vocational high school. The majority of students would attend normal public-based high schools through taking part in the high school entrance exams. The normal high schools are also classified into different levels: nationwide key high school, province-wide key high school, citywide key high school, district-wide key high school and others. This hierarchy was distinguished based on the quality of educational resource, teachers and students. The common belief is that students possess better chances to enter good universities if they study and graduate from good high schools.
learn all of those, I mean what would learning politics benefit me in future job hunting?... I understand it’s good for us to learn as much as possible when we’re young, but what I don’t understand is why we have to take part in exams of all subjects. I don’t know what would the exam results prove and to whom we are proving it. It just feels so meaningless.

Aside from the already existing study load, the students also mentioned that they bore a huge amount of pressure from their peers, parents and teachers. The following narratives gathered from Rebecca and Andy indicated that part of their motivation to study was to satisfy the teachers as well as not to let down their parents:

Rebecca: Some of my classmates are really smart and hardworking. It always feels like a competition and everyone is competing. The girl sits in front of me in my class, she does well in almost all subjects, every teacher likes her and she also plays piano….I don’t want to fall behind, I am not and I’ve never been a bad student.

Andy: After every exam, each student's mark and ranking would be fully disclosed to every other person in the class, sometimes we were ranked among the whole grade. I mean I never get what the point is but that’s what they do. The teachers would also mail this ranking list to our parents or discuss it with them during parents’ meetings. I’m not afraid of being blamed or scolded, kind of used to it growing up [laughter]. But I don’t want to see the disappointed look on my parents’ face; that would really make me uncomfortable and regret not to have worked harder.

Fisher: So what would you do?

Andy: Well I studied harder, I signed up for English and math tutorials after school, I went to cram schools every summer and I followed my mom’s “order” to choose the
science discipline\textsuperscript{17} in high school simply because she thought it’d be easier for me to choose majors in universities and find good jobs after, even though I’m actually interested in arts.

Central to these quotes was the students’ notions of being pressured, upset and helpless. This is largely due to the fact that Chinese parents usually have more influence or control over their children’s decisions at school and they always have higher expectations of their children’s academic performances. Students were compelled to study in the hope of getting good marks in exams to enter higher grades, satisfy their teachers, and live up to the expectations of their parents. The outcomes of using exams as the only gauge to evaluate the students as opposed to focusing on the overall development of young people are debatable. With the tremendous study load and the exam-oriented system, and with the teachers and parents pushing them, students felt that their motivation to study had been pulled away from the genuine desire to learn to completing exams and satisfying their teachers and parents. This is problematic in the sense that the educational component was identified to be constantly missing within these exams and therefore, would not genuinely benefit the young bodies and spirits in the long run.

According to the students, their frustration also stemmed from the deficient and hypocritical operation of Suzhi Education. As discussed in previous sections, Suzhi Education is the educational reform conducted in Chinese schools since the 1990s that aimed to lighten the students’ study burdens and diversify their school life. However, the actual implementation of Suzhi Education did not align with the students’ perceptions and experiences. In fact, the interview data revealed that the student population believed that Suzhi Education was merely empty rhetoric which had achieved very few real outcomes:

\textsuperscript{17} Students are distributed into arts and science disciplines usually in grade 8 in high school. Students get to choose a discipline and they are not tested the subjects in the other discipline in the college entrance exams. The science discipline includes physics, chemistry and biology while the arts discipline includes politics, history and geography. Meanwhile, Chinese, math and English are mandatory no matter whichever discipline students choose.
Jillian: They [the school] did add some extra-curricular workshops, such as crafts, Chinese calligraphy, public speaking, some sports clubs etc and some of them were pretty fun to join. However, they also added math and English tutorials teaching about the more advanced stuff. Well, I don’t see how that is EXTRA curriculum but that’s what they did.

Fisher: What did you attend?

Jillian: Math!

Fisher: Why? Didn’t you get to choose what you want to learn?

Jillian: [bitter smile] Well yeah, I got to choose math because my classmates, those who already did much better than me in math chose math, what options do I have?

Nick: [Suzhi Education] was a total fake when you are in higher grades. We were almost completely cut off from extra-curricular activities from grade 11, not only the extra-curricular actually, even music and PE became in-class individual studies.

Fisher: Did the school ban you from attending those activities and PE classes?

Nick: They didn’t literally say you cannot, but they didn’t have to. Nobody would want to go out in grade 12….The teachers, too would just turn a blind eye if we skip PE to study.

To this end, Suzhi Education starts to show bureaucratic manifestations when students are approaching higher grades and facing excessive study loads. The real outcome of this educational reform seemed to be feeble and troublesome. In fact, the study burden is not really alleviated; instead, the extra-curricular activities are compromised in face of the
pressure caused by exams. The students vividly depicted Suzhi Education as “addressing the symptoms but not the root causes” (Andy). If there would not be significant changes towards the educational system—the exam-centered and exam-oriented mechanism—Suzhi Education would at best act like a short episode during the whole play, and at worst lead things back to the initial point only with a much more complicated process.

Moreover, the student population was very critical about the way PE was situated in the educational system, especially at secondary school levels. Besides the mandatory PE classes, each student is required to take PE tests\(^{18}\) at the end of junior high and the marks students get in PE tests are accumulated to the total scores that they achieve in high school entrance exams. In high school, although there are no PE tests scheduled in grade 12, students need to take part in PE qualification tests\(^{19}\) in grade 11, and they need to pass the test to guarantee their registration for the college entrance exam one year later. In this sense, PE has been officially included within the exam systems and acts as an essential part of the graduation requirement. To be sure, the purpose of the above requirements is to increase the students’ involvement in physical activities, and I am sure the Chinese PE experts have a reasonable rationale for choosing those particular sporting events for the PE tests. Nevertheless, the students expressed a large amount of frustration and detailed the impact these requirements exerted on their PE classes as well as the values they assigned to physical activities:

Rebecca: I was not good at PE, so I practiced a lot. But the flipside of this was I only practiced with the purpose of passing the PE test. It was exhausting and I am bored, but

\(^{18}\) Policies vary in different provinces regarding the content of PE exams at this stage. In Beijing, the exams include mandatory events of basketball skills for both male and female students, 1000 meter run for male students and 800 meter run for female students, as well as selective events, which are solid ball throw and pull-up for male students and solid ball throw and sit-up for female students. PE exams are worth 40 points in total with 10 points for each event and 10 points for participation in daily PE classes. Again, the 40 points from PE would be accumulated into the final marks students get in high school entrance exams. This information was accessed from the high school entrance exam webpage (http://www.edu.cn/zx/201204/2012bjty/) of the Chinese Education and Research Network (http://www.edu.cn/) by the researcher on July 30, 2012. Also, the researcher had confirmed with every student participant during the interview process about the authenticity of this policy.

\(^{19}\) The testing events are the same as those included in PE exams for high school entrance exams. The difference is that the two selective events become mandatory. So instead of 3 events being tested in grade 9, in total 4 events are tested in grade 11.
I just didn’t know what else to do. Those 40 points would really make a difference, you know what I mean?

Fisher: Does the [PE] test help you to improve your strength and motor skills in sports and physical activities?

Rebecca: I don’t know, but I don’t think so. I run, I throw and I pass the test, end of story.

Another student, Andy, echoed this viewpoint:

Andy: PE in junior high was boring! We’d run a few laps to warm up and start practicing for the events [those will be tested in partial fulfillment to the high school entrance exams] under our PE teacher’s supervision. We’d have normally about 10-15 minutes before class dismissed and the teacher would say do whatever you want, you know, play some balls or something.

Fisher: And how do you feel about it?

Andy: [Shake head] I don’t like it; I even felt some kind of aversion to PE sometimes, and it was not supposed to be like that. I mean isn’t PE supposed to be fun?... At the very least, while I’m running, I hope I would think about myself, whether it is to make me stronger, feel good about myself, or even to lose some weight, but absolutely shouldn’t be the standards of the PE tests.

These narratives outlined the manner in which the student sample differentiated their motives of getting physically active from passing a PE test. To be sure, further studies would be necessary to evaluate the results of the mandate to include PE into exam systems and graduation requirements. There are no systematic and accurate statistics showing whether, or
to what extent, these requirements have increased the students’ participation in physical activities, improved their health conditions or diminished the likelihood of certain diseases, but that is a whole other story. However, what was uttered by the students was the adamant belief that their commitments to physical activities with the motive of passing the tests had already deprived them of fun that PE classes are supposed to have. More importantly, they maintained a firm attitude that they can not value the mandate. If it continues like this, there is an obvious potential for students to further disassociate participating in physical activities from the real benefits they have to offer, such as promoting physical health and cultivating optimistic characteristics, and would thereby delegitimize the original purpose of the requirements.

Accordingly, with the unique characteristics of OE identified previously, the following section presents a discussion of the students’ conceptualizations of OE, outlining how OE filled the gaps in traditional education and fixed the flaws in current PE. These discussions also unveil cases where OE managed to energize and engage the students where Suzhi Education had not.

4.6. Students Conceptualize Olympic Education

4.6.1. Incorporating New Materials: Learn with Interests

During the data collection process, the student population expressed a general willingness and interest in learning the Olympic-related knowledge. As mentioned in previous sections, Olympic Readers were distributed to students in OE model schools— the pamphlets primarily included the origin, history and development of the Olympic Games that aimed to familiarize the readers with facts and stories around the Olympic Movement. According to the student sample, Olympic Readers for Primary School Students were distributed to every
class above Grade 3 at their school and became very popular among their classmates. As Jillian and Helen said:

Jillian: I clearly remember the first page of the pamphlet is the *Ode to Sport*, followed by an introduction of Pierre de Coubertin and how he revitalized the modern Olympic Games. This is not something taught in other classes. I’ve learned something about the Olympics in PE before but not this systematically. This pamphlet helped me refresh my memories…. I particularly like the introduction of various sports, some I’ve never heard of before, some I know about the sport but not the disciplines or events…. I’m just glad I learned something new and fun.

Helen: I like reading about the Olympian’s stories, you know how some athletes grew out of nothing then came all the way and finally became Olympic medalists, very inspiring. I often got impressed by their determination and persistence, just makes you realize what it takes to succeed.

As shown in the above quotes, the *Olympic Readers* released a new kind of knowledge that inspired the students to learn. This was different from knowledge taught in traditional schooling as it did not require evaluations of any kind, so that it was the material *per se* that intrigued the students. In fact, the students noted that their exposure to Olympic-related knowledge occurred long before the *Olympic Readers* were distributed and was not limited to the pamphlets. They instead had multiple sources of learning, such as at the Olympic knowledge corridor, through the weekly broadcast and in their regular PE and Integrated classes taught by Mr. Zhang. As Helen explained:

Helen: No kidding we would flood to the corridor during breaks and sometimes in PE classes. There were 30ish boards there in both English and Chinese languages, the ones about the Greek origin and philosophies were on one side and others about more
detailed knowledge got replaced by new boards from time to time….I went there almost
everyday after lunch and I thought it was interesting.

Fisher: What about it do you think was interesting?

Helen: It’s not boring, I don’t know, math is boring, reciting texts in Chinese class is
boring, stuff on the boards is just fun to know. I’d rather read English from the boards
than my English text book, you know what I mean?... I learn it because I want to know,
not because I need to prepare for some exams.

These comments illuminated a type of knowledge that appeared to be attractive and inspiring
to the student body. The students’ interests stemmed from their desires to know as opposed
to the mandatory learning to fulfill the exam requirements. Initially I was worried that
compelling students to receive OE would add an extra burden to their existing study load and
ultimately dampen their interests. However, the students implied that rather than feeling
coerced and overloaded, the new content within OE actually spurred and widened their
interest to learn. As Andy suggested:

Andy: No, that was not time-consuming; at least, I don’t think so. It was fun…. After
learning about the origin of the ancient Olympic Games, I became very interested in the
ancient Greek myths; that was absolutely new to me and I want to go to Greece
someday to feel the history. I even read the Bible and got to know something about the
Western religions. I’d hardly have access to this kind of stuff if only focusing on what
are taught in the curriculum.

Previous literature suggests that the teaching and learning of Olympic-related knowledge
contribute as a “hidden curriculum” (Naul, 2008, p. 118) that strengthens OE in general.
Even though Olympic knowledge was never included as a subject in the compulsory
curriculum, the students confirmed that various Olympic themes were incorporated into
other school subjects in their day-to-day learning, including PE, Chinese, English, music and fine arts. Likewise, the students found the new materials in OE to be more of a motivation to widen their scope of knowledge as opposed to a burden. It injected new elements to the existing curriculum and intrigued students’ subjectivities. More importantly, continual exposure to the Olympic-related knowledge also helped to present a unique approach for the students to participate in the following OE themed activities.

4.6.2. Introducing Novel Pedagogy: Learn through Experiences

The literature review discussed how Olympism has been taught and learned within the school settings from many pedagogical perspectives. Aside from the didactic classroom learning about Olympic-related knowledge, the student sample noted that the combination of sports and Olympic-themed activities constituted one unique characteristic of OE, with the mini Olympic Games being one good example. In the opening ceremony, the students would march into the stadium representing different countries instead of their classes, and they were encouraged to be creative regarding costumes, slogans and the ways they made their debut, etc. When asked about how they engaged in the mini Olympic Games in the interviews, the students all acted very excited to talk about their roles and experiences:

Andy: My class was assigned with Japan. I was in charge of the blackboard newspaper decoration, so my class committee and I did a lot of online research about Japan, you know, like the Japanese culture, tradition and their involvements in the Olympic Games and so forth. We put together the information and some pictures on the blackboard in the back of our classroom for everybody to read and learn. One of my classmates was half Japanese so she taught us all some simple Japanese, and we shouted “One world, one dream” in Japanese while we marched. Oh and the best part was all of my class lined up for five queues and every queue was dressed in different color—yellow, red, green, blue and black, symbolizing the five rings on the Olympic flag. Three students were proceeding in front of us with the one in the middle holding the “Japan board” and
they were all wearing kimonos [laughter], looked very Japanese…. I thought we also
demonstrated the rules and basic moves of baseball to our schoolmates in the later part
of the mini Games but I don’t remember the details. The opening ceremony was
definitely the shining spot of the whole activity.

Nick: My class represented Libya. I remember we dressed up as African tribesmen by
putting on facial paints on our faces and bodies, and feather ornaments over our heads
and we looked so funny [laughter]. In an attempt to further showcase the culture of
native Africans during our parade, we marched in a formation resembling a bow with
an arrow nocked on its string…. Prior to these activities I had very little knowledge
about Libya, but now I know its geography, religions, you know, it’s very rich in gas
and natural gas, stuff like that. I would also pay more attention to Libya in the media
after, including the recent news on the revolution.

The above students’ narratives vividly revealed the opening ceremony in the mini
Olympic Games held at Yang Fandian Central Primary School. The way they described each
scene constantly made me feel like they just experienced it yesterday. A common perception
that the student participants maintained was that they not only got the opportunity to
perform, more importantly they were also encouraged to come up with the ideas and
thoughts to plan their performance. It was often during the discussions between students that
the most ingenious creativities emerged, and the students claimed to be very grateful that
their proposals were highly valued by the teachers. Moreover, learning through experiencing
was believed to have more potential to achieve better educational outcomes. As Rebecca
said:

Rebecca: I was most impressed by the torch lighting part in the mini Olympic Games
when I was in Grade 5. Mr. Zhang added a new element to the opening ceremony—we
students were dressed up to be soldiers and warriors, holding plastic and foam made
swords and shields to mimic the ancient war between the Spartans and the Athenians. It
was more like a performance; we pretended to fight and I even got “killed” in the battle [laughter]. As the battle continued, a girl student walked in from the other side of the playground holding a sign above her head with “Sacred Truce” on it. Then a Grade 6 student dressed in the Olympic angel costume appeared and ran slowly behind the sign bearer with a torch in his hand. All the “soldiers” would quietly stop fighting against each other, all eyes on the Olympic angel until he ran a half circle and lit the torch stand. I remembered that picture till today…. You know when I read about that the sacred truce had something to do with the Olympic Games’ origin in our Olympic corridor, and I was like ok, sacred truce [shrug]. But this was different! We literally acted it out! It really felt like the Olympic angel brought peace to the people. I really liked it!

As such, in contrast to the traditional didactic education within the classroom settings, which the student depicted as “passive learning” (Andy and Jillian) and which limited the freedom of class content, these OE activities allowed children to personally experience; they got to participate, present and make decisions. The learning process occurred along with the active participation, and knowledge that was inherent in the experiences obviously lasted longer than the knowledge printed in text books. Meanwhile, this kind of novel pedagogy energized the students by teaching through lively activities. Students therefore engaged in activities that they found interesting instead of what they were expected to learn by parents and the school authorities. Learning from actual experiences as opposed to text books constitutes the key of the novel pedagogy in which students demonstrate proactive attitude and willingness to participate and learn.

4.6.3. Conveying the Spirit: Learn from Role Models

There have been many discussions and criticisms about using Olympic athletes as role models to teach children in OE. Particularly, the criticisms revolve around the misconduct of certain athletes and the fact that Olympic athletes are too distant from the youth. Lenskyj (2008) points out that there are few, if any parallels between the lives of a professional
athlete and a common child so that it would be unrealistic to set elite athletes as role models for the global youth. This section, however, presents two detailed stories told by a student participant, James, who was not only a very active figure participating in various OE activities but is also the son of the PE teacher Mr. Zhang. It was because of this closer relationship that James’s personal experiences shed light on new meanings of OE. When asked about what OE meant to him, James portrayed his understanding of OE as the spirit of hardworking and persistence, something he learned from his father—that is, his role model in real life.

James: There were two very memorable moments. The first one was witnessing my dad crying when I was 5. I was too young to understand what was going on, but I could remember and tell he was very upset about something. He looked very much stressed and he was smoking a lot in the living room alone at night. My mom told me afterwards that it was because there wasn't enough funding for the Olympic boards needed for exhibition at our school. Oh the exact boards in our Olympic corridor actually. I quickly made the decision to give all my pocket money to my dad. Honestly I didn’t think much, I just didn’t want my dad to be upset. And there wasn’t much money either, I think around 1000 RMB [$160] something. However, my dad burst out crying in front of me after my gesture! I was kinda shocked but it was truly touching. Honestly I had no idea what he was pursuing at that time, I did not understand what Olympic education was. I only remembered it being the only time my dad has ever cried, and that was because of Olympic education.

James continued:

James: The second memorable moment for me happened last year, when my dad and I boarded the express train en route to Tianjin. While we were amazed by how fancy and fast the train was, my dad told me the story about how he managed to carry all the exhibition boards on a train to Beijing from Nanjing 10 years ago. Back then there was
no express train, and the boards were too big and fragile to be left on the seat. Therefore he had to place the boards at the connecting area between the two train carriages and crouch down to hold them. He said he also covered the boards up with blankets to prevent them from any possible damage. Because there was no seat there so he basically crouched beside the boards for the whole trip, about 10 hours. Well I decided to give it a try. But I was only able to squat down for about 15 minutes, after which point the numbness in my legs due to a lack of circulation was becoming unbearable. I could hardly imagine how my dad did it for 10 hours within that one square meter area. It struck me deeply when my mom later told me that my dad's legs were extremely swollen after that trip…. He had come a long way and put in numerous efforts in implementing Olympic education, but he never gave it up.

I was moved when hearing these stories. For James, it was his father’s persistence and perseverance along the process of conducting OE activities that were the most unforgettable and impressive. Therefore, James said whenever he thought about OE, he would relate it to his father and the spirit he learnt from him. The purpose of detailed presentation of these two stories was not to embellish Mr. Zhang’s contributions to OE. On the contrary, Mr. Zhang himself did not elaborate much during his interview about the difficulties of initiating OE activities and sometimes he just brushed it off. These stories were recalled and told by James and the association he made between his understanding of OE and his father was derived from his personal experiences. According to James, his conceptualization of OE also virtually influenced his behaviours. He would think about his father whenever he encountered difficulties and wanted to give up, and would repeatedly tell himself to hang in there longer until the difficulties could come around.

To be sure, the way James interpreted OE might not be applicable to the vast majority of other students. The inherent message, however, was that not only professional athletes and Olympic medalists can be regarded as role models in OE. Role models could be anybody who possessed merits that were educational to the students; they could be Mr. Zhang, any
other teacher or even the peer students. OE taught students the Olympic philosophies and values; it also provided them with a platform to connect and communicate through various activities. The Olympic spirit would be truly conveyed if the students each participate in the program with a willing mind, and they would discover aspirations from time to time just within their surroundings.

4.6.4. Engaging in PE Differently: Learn to Move

As discussed before, the student population expressed a general frustration about traditional PE at school based on their own experiences. They criticized current PE for being exam-oriented, loosely organized and lacking in fun, which diminished the interest that they were supposed to have in PE. Obviously, the mandate to fulfill certain PE hours at school and add up PE marks as partial requirement to entrance examinations were too narrow solutions to effectively engage the students in physical activities and make them healthier. Nevertheless, the students pointed out that they had embraced a whole new concept and experienced a series of physical activities in PE classes in the name of OE, which ultimately altered their perspectives towards PE.

On a pure knowledge level, the students reached a consensus that they each got to know that there were actually such many sports existing in and beyond the Olympic Games. I asked them to name some sports that they did not know previously and would not have known unless being exposed to OE, and they could all quickly identify some examples. As Jillian stated:

Jillian: I’ve never heard of curling before Mr. Zhang showed us a video of a curling competition. Actually I didn’t even know there was a winter Olympic Games. It looked much like a shuffle board to me but people play it on the ice. Mr. Zhang explained the rules of curling while we were watching and I found it very fascinatingly interesting.
Likewise, Jillian noted that she was disappointed after being told that curling equipment was very expensive and it is almost impossible to find a curling rink locally in Beijing. However, she then told a story about how her class managed to bring curling to their actual PE classes under the guidance of Mr. Zhang:

Jillian: Mr. Zhang encouraged us to think and discuss, and find ways to simulate playing the game on a slippery icy surface. We came up with ideas such as using the wheels from trolleys and suitcases. The discussion process was full of fun. But surprisingly, Mr. Zhang came to class with 5 wheels and said we were going to play curling! Well here’s how we played—we set up obstacles on the playground and raced to propel the wheels to the finishing line with brooms. Although it was totally different from the actual curling; the wheels were very tiny and difficult to control, and I’m sure we must look very hilarious to others. But we had tons of fun playing it…. I also watched curling in the 2010 winter Olympics and explained the rules to my mom, she was surprised that I knew.

For Jillian and several other students, it was good for them to enrich the knowledge about new Olympic sports, but better to have the opportunities to bring those unreachable sports into real life with enormous interest in sports and PE classes. The message that young people received as a consequence of these experiences was the encouragement of being creative and ready to think. This process was critically educational; instead of reading about curling in textbooks or watching it on a TV, the students could touch, feel and actually play it. As Jillian suggested, “It was so much fun because it was real.”

This kind of creativity peaked with a stirring of interest in making equipment of their own among students at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School. The idea was originally derived from the gap between the students’ desire to diversify PE content and the severe lack of safe and proper sporting equipment. As such, PE teacher Mr. Zhang asked his students to collect
waste papers, rubber rings, foam, and plastic bottles and he guided them to make sport equipment out of these scraps, such as paper balls, hurdles and discus. As Rebecca recalled:

Rebecca: Lots of us used to keep a plastic bag by our desks, recycling all the waste paper to make paper balls. Once the bag was full we would tie it up, conformed it into the shape of a ball, and wrap tapes over it to keep it spherical. Sometimes we even wrapped color paper over the plastic ball or drew pictures over it. It was such a fashion to make paper balls, I mean students from every class made paper balls during that time, and we would compete to see who could make the most pretty and creative ones. The winning ones would be displayed in the exhibition window, too. Of course the patterns were mostly Olympic- related. I remembered I made one with a picture of three children on it, who were Asian, Caucasian and African, respectively. Above the children I also drew the five rings of the Olympics representing friendship and mutual understanding.

Rebecca further mentioned the multiple ways to play with these paper balls:

Rebecca: You can play it in ways that you could possibly think of with a ball, such as soccer, handball, volleyball, even dodgeball. Oh and the best part about paper ball is that it does not hurt when it hits people, unlike soccer. One time I was hit in the face by a soccer ball, the subsequent nose bleed and loose tooth caused me significant misery. However, paper balls would not cause these problems.

In this sense, the self-made equipment managed to largely diversify the content of PE classes and multiply the joy and fun students have participating in sports and physical activities. In contrast to the common perspective that these students previously shared with regard to the instructionalized training and monotonous patterns in traditional PE classes, OE significantly triggered the students’ interest and creativities. These narratives from the students confirmed Mr. Zhang’s argument in previous sections that activities within OE provided an opportunity
to propel PE reform. With this creativity, the students would therefore precede PE instead of following it.

Another important notion that the student sample voiced was that OE energized and engaged everyone through various physical activities regardless of the students’ different levels of physicality. Unlike traditional PE and sporting competitions that distinguish the physically active students and the inactive ones, activities that students engaged in OE diminished this gap between the students with more physical talent, strength and flexibility and the ones without. Aside from the physical activities per se, OE also incorporated the organizing of certain activities with mass participation involved. As Nick explained:

Nick: I have been active my whole life and have been a track athlete since primary school. For me I’m good at many sports and I just like to be active, you know, I don’t need people to organize activities for me in the free time during PE classes and I’d go play basketball or go kick some ball. But I’m not saying this organizing process is not important, I think it was extremely important for my inactive peers. They would be more likely to participate and engage in physical activities with someone organizing or something being organized…. I think OE in primary school did that.

Likewise, Helen, as one of the inactive students, related deeply to Nick’s opinion. She elaborated on how she achieved the transmission from being “lazy and slow” to “being willing to participate.” In winter time when schools usually require students to do running instead of broadcasting gymnastics exercise during class intervals, PE teachers at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School turned their daily running into a marathon during the implementation of OE. They started by telling the students about the origin of the marathon in the Olympics, which connected the story to their daily running. As Helen described:

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20 This is a mandate in Chinese schools that all students need to do physical activities during the 15-20 minutes class interval in the morning. Usually the tradition is broadcasting gymnastics exercises in summer and running in winter. This tradition is still being practiced among Chinese elementary, junior high and high schools.
Helen: The nature of the run did not change and we would still run by class. What was added was that a couple PE teachers would time our laps and record the lengths that we ran everyday. We were then told about the distance we have run and it was accumulative. We would also be told about our percentage completion of a full marathon and how much more we need to run. The PE teachers would stand by us beside the track, trying to encourage students to finish their exercise everyday. Just like this, after about three months every student has completed a full 42 kilometer marathon! These runs were no different from any other runs we used to do before, but the marathon stories totally worked. I couldn’t believe I did it, non-stop for almost three months!

Another student, Andy, added to this:

Andy: no one, and I mean no one, would fall behind the teams. Solidarity was the key. We [the students] would encourage each other to keep on running, and we held hands with the ones who could not keep up, making sure they could as well finish….In the end, this boring exercise was transformed into something much more fun, and everyone was happy about the fact that we really had completed a marathon.

These students’ narratives were some among the many that illuminated how the OE project managed to motivate and engage the majority of students to participate. It attracted the students with novel themes and elements incorporated in sports, and the actual educational message was carried out by means of various sports and physical activities. Also, OE offered a platform for students to connect and socialize through the practice of physical movement and experiencing Olympic-themed activities. To this end, the significance of OE being added to the students’ understandings reached beyond the fun they had in PE classes towards inspiring creativity and shaping new ideas of active and healthy lifestyles.
4.7. Self-assessed Influences of Olympic Education

This section presents narratives with regard to the influences that participating in OE activities exerted on the students from their own perspectives. Although each student participant’s length of exposure to OE activities varied, and their individual experiences were invariably shaped by the participants’ own background and specific OE activities that she/he participated in, this student population demonstrated several common themes regarding how certain OE programs shed light on them. These varied experiences and the self-assessed influences are explored in the following sections.

4.7.1. Highlighting PE and Advocating Integrated Development

The first theme unveiled from the students’ narratives was that participating in OE programs and the way they engaged in those activities promoted students’ well-rounded qualities. The students believed that, as opposed to traditional education which solely emphasizes intellectual development and written exams, OE contributed to the integrated and balanced development of the individual student, including but not limited to intellectual studies, and also physical and moral progress.

In relation to the physical development, Andy suggested:

Andy: Originally I wasn't physically active at all. I had little interest in PE and sports because I would easily get tired in practicing and could rarely compete with the peers…. My PE teacher used to enforce the importance of challenging and exceeding one's limit, you know, something like that. But that did not give me the motivation to change. During OE, I finished my first 1000-meter run in grade 4, and for sure I was exhausted, but it was from then on I started to understand what it meant to challenge my own limit….I became more and more enthusiastic about physical activities and sports
growing up, and after some point I actually started to perform well, even in competitions. I joined the orienteering club in university last semester, and am now practicing in the routinely training, three times a week. I wouldn’t feel tired at all, and most importantly I felt good about myself after working out; I enjoyed the teamwork experience and felt stronger and healthier.

As the above quote shows, Andy’s initial enjoyment of physical activity was closely linked to the opportunity to be personally involved within it. He could gradually note his self-improvement and identify the sense of pride in his progress through his continual exposure to physical activities and sports, which eventually led to his improvement in both motor repertoire and health status. Moreover, with the opportunities sports provided to meet and connect with peers, Andy showed increased self-confidence through his participation in sports.

Secondly, the students indicated that OE initiated new forms of moral education and refreshed their understandings of certain values. Moral education has always played a very critical role in the Chinese educational systems; morality courses are enforced as part of the compulsory curriculum through all school levels and are regarded as an important gauge in a student’s overall evaluation. This is largely due to the deep-rooted tradition derived from Confucianism and the ancient Eastern civilization of teaching respect, virtue and morality. Likewise, in my meeting with Rebecca, she described moral education in OE as “active learning” of values. The following narrative further outlines the manner in which Rebecca differentiated moral education inherent to OE from the one she learned in morality class:

Rebecca: We were exposed to a lot of words that were extended from the Olympic spirits regarding value, virtue and good behaviour. On the surface, these words are not unfamiliar at all because they are kind of repetitive compared to what we’re taught in morality classes growing up, such as solidarity, mutual understanding, peace, respect, etc. But what happened in morality class was that you were told what virtue was, what
behaviours qualified good virtues and what you should be doing. In OE, however, we were also told what good virtue were, well in a much fun way first, usually our teachers would incorporate those values in stories that happened in the Olympic Games. But then we would be able to act out those virtues in Olympic-related activities, and I think that was where it made me finally understand the meanings of those words, you know, through personal experiences.

In Rebecca’s opinion, the relationship between morality education in traditional curriculum education and OE is parallel to the relationship as she depicted, between “teach and educate” as well as “know and understand”. Central to this theme was the lack of educational component in curriculum morality mandate. Nevertheless, while significant emphases were given to students’ experiences and feelings when participating in various activities in OE, they would gradually develop concrete and specific understandings by attaching meanings to the words and figuring out what virtue really is, and then perform it in daily life.

Further to that, James elaborated on how morality education within OE perpetuated his understanding of values, particularly the sense of solidarity:

James: We [his whole class] spent a lot of time together rehearsing the march for the opening ceremony [of the mini Olympic Games], and I saw how it brought every member in the class together towards one common goal. Usually in previous sporting meetings, you could tell people were so slacked off during the march, you know, we’d display a great deal of laziness and lack of uniformity. But the march to the opening ceremony in the mini Olympic Games was apparently more fun and it attracted more attention from my classmates and me. We’ed spend after school time, lunch break, you know, a lot of our free time practicing; time and time again….Since some point on, our class has become more integrated since students are now more active and collaborating with each other.
Fisher: Really? You think this has something to do with what happened in OE?

James: [Nod] Yeah. Before entering the 4th grade, our class did not exhibit decent grades and good conduct in terms of academic studies and school rules. In fact, we used to be stranded in the bottom of all 5 classes. However, we gradually swam up to the upstream and had since become the top class in our grade. Upon graduation, we were honored as the Model Class in Excellence in the City of Beijing…. Even though before the event the class has seemed to be a plate of loose sands where everyone stood only for themselves, we have transformed ourselves into being a strong unit of co-operating individuals who value the importance of group honor.

Jillian mirrored James’s comment and said:

Jillian: Sometimes during OE, I could feel the strong sense of solidarity developed through organizing the activities, and I think that sense was extremely contagious!... I had an extremely worthwhile experience to be part of a group [her class] in which everyone participated in brainstorming and planning, and worked diligently together to achieve one common goal…. I think this should be what OE wanted us to learn, you know, about the spirit of solidarity.

The perceptions from James and Jillian confirmed the need of young people to learn about morality through concrete examples and experiences. Instead of year after year of exposure to all the words about value and virtue, they would require actual meanings to be attached to those words which would develop genuine understandings. Meanwhile, the students believed those understandings would have a more lasting influence and the potential to fundamentally entice behavioural changes for them in conducting good manners.

4.7.2. Allowing Freedom and Promoting Empowerment
Another significant impact the students identified through experiencing OE activities were the unprecedented freedom and empowerment that had been granted to them. Invariably, the way this student sample defined freedom and empowerment was enormously shaped by their previous experiences encountering rigid regulations and restrictions in schools. For the most part, these restrictions were usually carried out under the form of multiple school rules and with the supervision from the school teachers. Noticeably, narratives from the students in the following section described their participation in OE activities during the official implementation of OE programs (2006-2008) as opposed to the whole period at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School. Therefore, it is particularly interesting to unpack how the school managed to twist the rules which used to act as the greatest impediment to the students’ desire to achieve freedom for the purpose of conducting OE and living up to the name of OE model school.

The student sample noted a non-standard definition of freedom generated from OE. On the surface, there exists a general agreement among the student population that OE virtually created more legitimate free time on campus. By “legitimate”, the students were referring to their out-of-classroom time with permissions from their teachers and school principal, which Helen described as “unbelievably incredible”. She further explained:

Helen: Back then there were a lot of people coming to visit the school, foreigners, journalists, educational officials and even students from other schools. So the teachers selected a couple students as “Olympic commentators,” you know, basically to show them around the schools, explain our OE activities, demonstrate how to play with our soft equipment, stuff like that. I was selected and trained, recited a lot of stuff. What happened was one or more “Olympic commentators” would leave class and conduct the touring once people came, and go back to class after they left. Usually once, twice a week, sometimes more frequent.

Fisher: So you would miss some class for that?
Helen: [Nod] You can say that.

Fisher: How did you feel about it?

Helen: I was looking forward to it! I mean first of all, it felt kinda like an honour to be selected as the commentator, I think only those who display good academic performance got selected. More importantly, it’s like I got a legitimate reason to skip class, and I got to meet different people, talk to them, you know, it was just way much better than being in the classroom. I think my classmates envied me for having that kind of opportunities, it felt unbelievably incredible!

While Rebecca and Andy also indicated similar experiences as Helen’s, they further added:

Rebecca: My class was going to represent Korea in the opening ceremony and we were running out of time because we didn’t have the Korean costumes ready before the opening ceremony. So I went on shopping with my teacher during morning classes, including one English class I remember, mostly acting as the model to try on the costumes. But the point is I got to skip English class and with a teacher!

Andy: My whole class used to rehearse for our march at the cost of missing a few classes, and it was an instruction from our teacher.

As these quotes show, the students presented an atypical understanding of freedom and equated time they spent outside of classroom when they were not supposed to be as “free time”. The underlying message, however, was the long-term inhibition inherent in rigid school discipline that the students used to bear. Although most participants were in agreement that they were either deliberately missing class or proud of it, they claimed it to be very unusual to have the legitimate opportunity to do so, and to see their teachers ranking something (OE) ahead of school work. However, under the guise of this “legitimation,” the
instruction taken from the teachers had already misled the students and passed on an inappropriate message upon them. What the student sample did not see was the administrative orders behind implementing the OE programs which transformed into the school’s motives to showcase itself through OE activities. As a matter of fact, in situations like this, the students were either liberated or empowered. Therefore, having permitted hours out of classroom was unusual, but definitely no freedom. This was not mindful of what was the best for the students, and certainly should not be further legitimized within the school settings.

On the other hand, the positive side of freedom was unveiled by the student population with regard to their experiences in sports participation, class design and event planning during OE activities. An unprecedented amount of empowerment was claimed to be promoted and the student sample pointed out the enhancement of this empowerment was closely associated with their increasing level of self-worth and self-confidence. There was evident belief among the students that this was one of the positive impacts that OE activities contributed to them:

Andy: When we played with our soft equipment and under our rules, I wouldn’t feel the tensity that I always used to feel during sports competitions, you know, like if you’re not that good at sports, when you are on a basketball team or run a relay race, you’d always be under the pressure worrying about what if I screw up and drag down the whole team. I’ve had such experiences and I felt horrible. Also you’d notice people don’t want to side with you in team games because you’re not that good, and that is so embarrassing…. However, the things we did with OE were different in the way that you wouldn’t feel like you are competing with others, even in a sports game. We didn’t select the good ones out to compete; everyone competed and everyone’s contribution counted….I think the goal was just to make us participate, be active and enjoy the game.
As in all of their OE programs, mass participation in sports and physical activities had always been the focal point. This requires PE teachers to be fully aware that their education targets were pupils instead of professional athletes, and therefore, physical skill mastery should not be the sole means to empower students in sports participation. In fact, the inherent message within Andy’s narrative was that he was indeed overwhelmed by the competitive atmosphere within previous sporting games. On the contrary, activities in OE helped students navigate their roles through altered rules and equipments, and build up their confidence by situating them into massive sports participation. It also provided the possibility and prerequisite for students to advance their physical skills in the future.

Another very important notion of empowerment lies in the expanding scope of appreciation in terms of the opinions and advice students expressed in planning and designing the Olympic-themed activities. During the interviews, students implied that being obedient was an exclusive feature within traditional schooling, while engaging in OE activities offered them more freedom and provided them with a unique platform to evoke questions and voice opinions:

Helen: We were always being told about what’s right, what’s wrong and what should be done. The way our teachers used to react suggested that we’re only expected to following the instructions, period. Gradually, I mean, gradually you’d get used to it, you do what you’re told, like it or not, at least that’d never be wrong.

As opposed to being passive and discouraged, the students indicated a salient change encountering OE activities. As Rebecca indicated:

Rebecca: The teachers would ask us for opinions, you know, what to do to make OE program at our school stand out. For example, when there were foreign students came to visit our school, the teachers would ask us to think of ideas that could showcase the Chinese tradition and culture. We discussed about performing martial arts and Chinese
Kung Fu, but the problem was that stuff like Tai Chi was too slow and boring and Kung Fu would be too professional for us to learn. But our PE teacher spoke highly of our idea and said he’d be in charge of solving the practical problems. So in the end, what happened was that the teachers designed a set of “martial art gymnastics” and taught to us during PE classes. It was like a combination of Kung Fu, martial arts and aerobic exercise and we performed it to the German students during Heart-to-Heart and in several subsequent activities…. The martial arts gymnastics was unique and fun, but the point was we originally came up with the idea and it was adopted. That felt pretty awesome.

Another student, Jillian, echoed Rebecca’s point:

Jillian: The teachers would ask what we wanted for the opening ceremony. We brainstormed together for days, discussing how to make it the most creative and different from the past. We wrote up proposals and pooled our ideas until finally produce a really good plan…. They [the teachers] elicited us to think and allowed us to speak it out loud. Once you saw your proposal was adopted and carried out into reality, you’d feel so proud. I think it was during this process that we were able to learn the most out of it. Take the opening ceremony for an example, everyone has only one role in the actual performance, guess the one carrying the torch must feel a lot different than someone who walked in the athlete march. Although there was only one torch bearer every time, if you contributed to the planning phase, you’d too feel much better and learn more than if you only walked in the team.

In many ways, the OE activities carried out in schools could have much the same impact as a radical educational reform with regard to enhancing freedom and fostering students’ creativities. The students discovered a new kind of relationship from the empowering message that OE wished to pass along and generated numerous creativities through various activities. Instead of being inhibited and restrained, they were valued and encouraged.
Despite the motives behind this encouragement, the students were really liberated from the previous norms; self-confidence and self-esteem were also believed to be built up simultaneously along with the space and freedom being offered in these OE activities.

4.7.3. Bridging the Gap between Chinese Students and the World

As literature reviews frequently point out, international education constitutes a unique and critical role in the ideology of OE and has a great potential to produce more lasting influences on the program recipients. With the opportunity that OE creates to attach sports with other social and educational activities in a global setting, the senses of friendship and mutual understanding occur within the connection and interaction between local students and their foreign counterparts. The student sample offered perceptions that echo this speculation and strengthen the role that OE played as a bridge between them and the outside world. James and Rebecca recalled their experiences participating in the Heart-to-Heart program in 2007 and said:

James: We learned a little bit of German. The school hired instructors who taught us on a weekly basis about basic conversations in German, such as greetings, self introduction, counting numbers and so on. I still remember that greetings in the morning are different from those in the evening, as well as expression of honorific….It felt a little bit awkward at first because most of our communications still relied on the help from our English teachers and the translator who came along with them, but we eventually managed to play together. We taught them to fly kites, you know, we showed them the hurdles that we made using plastic bottles, the paper balls and demonstrated how we usually play. They tried our equipment and we played together.

Rebecca: I knew nothing about Germany before they [the German students] came to our school but now I think it’s a lot different. I could talk about German traditions and stuff to my parents and friends in junior high…. I wasn’t able to remember various foreign
national flags before, especially those composed of three color stripes. We used to test about the flags in geography exams but still, the stripe-patterns were just too much alike to identify. Even now I still often confuse the French with the Russian flags. However, I can clearly remember the German flag because there used to be lots of Germany-related elements at our school. We hung both the Chinese and German flags above the blackboard in the classroom with a small heart in between, symbolizing friendship between the two countries…. We went to watch the semi-final women’s soccer between Japan and Germany, cheering for the German team in 2008…. I wouldn’t ever have the opportunity to have this many connections to Germany without these OE activities.

According to James and Rebecca, the Heart-to-Heart Program within OE enriched their knowledge about Germany and provided them with the opportunity to be close to foreigners. They maintained that this experience felt “real” because the interaction happened in “real interpersonal scenarios.” As confirmed by teachers at Yang Fangdian Central Primary school, OE activities had earned the school wide recognition and reputation that they could not possibly have before. Between the year of 2006 and 2009, an increasing number of foreign scholars, journalists and students came to visit and the local students would therefore periodically have access to foreigners. The student population perceived noticeable changes in terms of their outlook and feelings interacting with foreigners compared with previous experiences:

Jillian: I used to avoid talking to foreigners because I had no confidence in my English, plus I rarely saw people from other countries when I was a kid, so they were quite mysterious to me. However, during the Olympic Games, there were quite a lot of foreigners all over Beijing, and there were a lot coming to my school, too…. I felt awkward at first, probably because I was too shy, but gradually, I talked to them, introduced our activities, played with the foreign students, and now I’m not afraid of talking to foreigners. It just felt normal.
Helen: I wouldn’t dare talk to foreigners, and in fact, I never talked to any foreigner before the OE activities.

Fisher: Why? What were you afraid of?

Helen: I felt too shy to speak to them with my broken English, and I didn’t want to embarrass myself. More importantly, I didn’t know what to say, you know, I heard they have very different culture and traditions.

Fisher: Right, um….

Helen: But once I really spoke with a foreigner, I noticed nothing was actually that scary. I spoke English when the German students came, and when it didn’t work, we used gestures, body language, facial expression, you know, everything that could assist our communication [laughter], and it worked! We played together and had loads of fun…. After that I actually felt quite confident and comfortable conversing with them. Even now I’m still keeping up correspondence with my German friend I met in 2007.

Another student, Andy, added:

Andy: Surprisingly, and not that surprisingly actually, I find there’re more and more foreigners speaking Chinese. I once met a foreigner on the bus who asked me whether I was getting off or not in Chinese, it flew super naturally…. I think it’s a good sign, you know, not only we’re trying to get closer to them, they are also doing the same thing.

As their detailed narratives implied, students described their previous encounters with foreigners under the notions of shyness, awkwardness and self-consciousness resulted from their limited exposure to foreigners and the lack of confidence in language proficiency. However, China has significantly opened up within the globalization era, especially after the
Beijing Olympic Games. OE programs literally offered students real opportunities to closely communicate and interact with their foreign counterparts. The students would therefore be imperceptibly influenced by their increasing exposure and gradually foster international visions. The role that OE played confirmed what previous literature conceived as “cultivating qualified citizens of the global village” (Ren, 2009, p.47). The students regarded OE as a bridge between themselves and the Olympic Games, as well as the outside world. As Rebecca humorously described, “participating in OE activities was like watching a documentary about the whole world on a high resolution TV, only the camera had zoomed in on our own experiences!” Influences that this bridge would actually bring may need to wait for years to come. However, at this point, OE in China initiated a good start for the students to get ready becoming part of the future global community.

4.8. For the Betterment of the Future—Advice from Students

When asked about whether there had been any unpleasant experience encountering OE activities, the student sample unanimously reported limited negative feedbacks towards the program per se while they directed the problems back to the educational system at large. However, while the young people believed firmly that OE was and could be employed as an effective tool to tackle problems inherent to their current schooling, they also offered some proactive thinking towards the betterment of conducting OE in schools. Moreover, although they alluded to their disappointment in the vanishing of OE programs after the Olympic Games, the students addressed their sympathies and understandings, and demanded alternative possibilities to be sought in the future.

_Genuine education versus showcasing activity_

Most students were in general agreement that the value and ideology that OE promotes were educational and worth learning; the educational content was novel and the pedagogy was
well developed. Also, these young people noted that the implementation of OE was beyond reproach; for the most part, it managed to intrigue their interest and address their needs. Nevertheless, they identified some details that they wished OE could have done better.

While the student sample generally maintained that most OE programs had achieved brilliant educational outcomes, they considered some individual activities to be “a little too official” (Rebecca), particularly those held between 2006 and 2008. Within numerous activities organized in their school under the name of OE during that period, the students gradually distinguished OE programs as those to be conducted with the purpose of self-improvement and those held to showcase to other people. Therefore, some students were, to some extent, skeptical about the conceivable educational outcomes that stemmed from those “too official programs.” As Rebecca and Helen noted:

Rebecca: There were all kinds of programs, and sometimes you just felt a bit overwhelmed, not in the sense that you’d hate it, it was just… I’ll give you a couple examples, when there were inspectors, some officials from the education commission I guess, came to visit our school, and we’d have some kind of ceremonies. You know, in that case, it’d be very official— they would usually sit behind a long table and give our school some kind of gifts, books, etc. The top official would first address the ceremony and our principal, sometimes teachers would give speeches about what we did for OE, blah, blah, blah…. They could talk and talk for hours and we were required to be there the whole time!

Helen: There used to be moments that the music teacher suddenly gathered us, members in the Olympic Angel Chorus, from different classes to the music classroom because there were people visiting. We would sing and they would applaud, credit us with some good words, and we’d be dismissed after they left. Ok I’m not saying I didn’t want to sing for them, actually I did and I was glad that I did something for my school. It’s just… I think I enjoyed OE more when I got to play [paper] balls with my
classmates or throw some javelin in PE classes. Even I enjoyed singing during our opening ceremony; that was different, we sang while the torch bearer approached the crowd, and it was such a sacred moment, you know what I mean? It felt more genuine compared to what we did in the music classroom.

It is evident from the above narratives that students were sometimes mobilized to showcase OE activities with the goal of satisfying the school’s agenda, and their gestures had indispensably contributed to the school’s upgraded reputation. While the student population acknowledged their teachers’ effort to include the large majority of the student body into various Olympic-themed activities, they also expressed hope for those activities to be “as genuine as possible.” Again, students repeatedly confirmed that they would not mind participating in such official activities, and nor were they bitter about the intention behind them. Nevertheless, they had also made it very clear that OE should indubitably incorporate and include more activities that centered on the students themselves and aimed to address their needs, as opposed to the other way around.

**Alternative possibilities of Olympic education**

Data presented in previous sections illuminated the frustration that the student population experienced with the general education system. Major sources of this frustration came from the excessive and redundant study burden and the exam-oriented nature, as well as the feeble yet hypocritical approach to the implementation of educational reform policies. Particularly, the student participants were upset about the way PE was situated in the educational system. They were convinced of their perception that including PE tests as either part of the matriculation exams or part of the graduation requirements would be very unlikely to increase their physical skills nor would they entice behavioural changes in terms of participating in sports and physical activities. In fact, the students believed that solely emphasizing the PE tests diminished their previous interest in physical activities and their
appreciation for PE at school. Therefore, the student sample expressed their urge to shake the problematic educational system and hope for possible changes:

James: They [the educational authorities] could do couple of things, like they could implement policies to cut off the redundant stuff in the curriculum, or at least get rid of some exams, you know, adjust some exams of certain subjects to pass or fail. More importantly, I really wish the school could stop disclosing our grades to our peers; I just hate that stressed atmosphere it created….I think it upsets more people than it could actually encourage.

Another student Jillian agreed with James and further pointed out the problems of the school administration attempting to control and dictate students’ behaviours as opposed to influencing and educating. She also expressed her hope to be notified and consulted ahead of time before school authorities exercised certain policies on students. As Jillian said:

Jillian: The school barely did anything that addressed our need, as if what we wanted didn’t matter. For example, the teacher would always be like, here’s the list of courses you can choose from for the extra-curricular activities this term, pick one and hand it back to me, so and so, you know, things like that. It upset me because it just never occurred to them that we might want to have some say of what we would want on the list. The routine seems like they [the school authorities] are up there, giving instructions and orders, and we’re just expected to follow and act it out, period…. I’m not challenging their authorities or anything, I just think we should deserve more, you know, they should give us more legitimized freedom. At least, I think I’d want to see in advance what would be coming.

As Jillian’s narrative showed, students were excluded from the process that policies were developed and delivered, and these policies were too often made for and targeting no one but the students themselves. Therefore, young people were disappointed and even a little
resentful about their lack of involvement which ultimately led to the fact that students’ actual needs and feedback out of these policies were identified to be constantly missing.

Further to this, another student, Nick, argued that certain gestures are needed to address the actual cause of these problems. More specifically, he stressed that the college entrance exam policy has to be modified in order to fundamentally solve the flaws within current educational systems:

Nick: It might still be too soon to eliminate it [the college entrance exam] completely, although I’d like to see it being abolished. But I mean realistically, as long as it’s still there, nothing could actually be of any difference. You know, the good part in school can only exist in lower grades and high school would always be like study, study and study, you know what I mean? No matter it being Olympic education or whatever, there’s no room for it in high school…. At least, I mean they should be able to come up with multiple standards, just to diversify the evaluation standards. I heard that there’s no such thing like college entrance exams in Canada, right?

Fisher: Um…. I’m not sure but I don’t think so.

Nick: There we go, you know, pay more attention to the students’ daily performance, offer some credit to expertise in other areas besides academics, you know, all-rounded development, stuff like that, not only one exam.

In this sense, the student population offered advice to tackle problems inherent to the inconvenient educational system on multiple levels. Behind these narratives were their genuine wishes for moderate study load, well-designed curriculum, legitimized roles and reasonable criteria for evaluation. Likewise, the student sample was adamant that OE succeeded in addressing these wishes through approaches to justify the role of PE, energize and engage the students on a large scale, and grant them an unprecedented level of
empowerment. Additionally, the burden-free characteristic of OE liberated the students from inhibition and pressure caused by their previous study load, and offered them the opportunity to really pursue a more balanced life within and out of school.

OE programs, however, gradually died out after the Olympic Games were concluded, and five out of the six student participants claimed that they never again got opportunities to engage in OE activities after graduating from Yang Fangdian Central Primary School. Disappointed as they were, what surprised me the most were the students’ sympathy and understanding towards the vanishing of OE. As Andy explained:

Andy: There was a lot of passion among us [the students] during the implementation of OE, and I think a large amount of this passion was because of the Olympic Games, so you couldn’t possibly hope it would stay for good. Besides, we were not outsiders of the Beijing Olympic Games; we participated through Olympic education and you know, I think all those experiences should really matter.

As a consequence, the more important question remains, what needs to be done to make “those experiences” matter? The student body strongly suggested that while OE programs might have fair reason to disappear, the inherent educational messages should stay. These young people urged the education officials and administrators to revise educational policies and continue seeking alternative possibilities to engage and empower Chinese students in the ways that OE used to. They also called for the individual school authority to initiate school-based programs to create more opportunities for students to engage in PE and other activities, with the ultimate goal of promoting balanced development and cultivating students with well-rounded qualities.
Chapter 5
Conclusions and Recommendations

5.1. Research Overview

The intention of this thesis was to expand our current knowledge of the underlying educational message that was inherent to the modern Olympic Movement and examine how OE programs were implemented by the host countries/cities. In an effort to do so, OE programs conducted in the 2008 Beijing summer Olympic Games were thoroughly examined and evaluated. Results from interviewing the five key informants who were heavily involved in planning and implementing Beijing’s OE programs shed light on the motives and goals that BOCOG and the Chinese government intended to achieve through conducting OE programs, and pointed out both possibilities and limitations of conducting OE programs on such a large scale among Chinese schools. More importantly, this thesis also for the first time included the students’ experiences engaging in OE programs by interviewing six students who participated in OE activities before and during the Beijing Olympic Games. By doing this, the voices of the program recipients were amplified in the process of conceptualizing OE and examining the influences that OE exerted upon them. The flowing section summarizes the research findings by presenting conclusions pertaining to each research question. Limitations and recommendations for future research and practice of OE are also discussed at the end.

Research Question #1: What were the prime motives and key imperatives of BOCOG and the Chinese government when planning OE programs? What kind of educational outcomes did China want to achieve through conducting those programs?
After being awarded the right to host the 2008 summer Olympic Games in 2001, Beijing made the commitment to conduct OE programs among China’s 400 million youngsters with the purpose to meet the educational requirement set out by the IOC in the *Host City Contract*. A nationwide OE project was launched by BOCOG together with national and provincial education commissions to fulfill this commitment. Due to the relatively short and discontinuous history of China’s involvement in the Olympic Games, Chinese people and students had very limited exposure to the Olympic Movement and Olympic-related knowledge. Therefore, the first and primary goal of launching OE programs was to teach people what the Olympic Games are and further inspire a deeper understanding of the Olympic values and spirit.

One unique characteristic of OE was to use sports as a primary means to educate students, which, therefore, provided the possibility to employ Olympism as a viable tool to reform current PE in China’s educational system. By including PE into partial graduation requirement and compulsory exam systems, students encountered more mandate as opposed to education which was believed to have significantly decreased their enjoyment and enthusiasm. Also, hassles caused by students’ safety issues and the minor role PE played in the educational hierarchy encouraged willing PE teachers to seek change. It was hoped that the promotion of OE could legitimise the role that PE played in the educational system and ultimately contribute to PE reform in Chinese schools.

Another essential goal of OE was to widen the students’ vision and foster their sense of internationalism. OE activities such as the Heart-to-Heart Program provided Chinese students with real life opportunities to communicate with their foreign counterparts and further embrace the Olympic spirit of friendship and mutual understanding. The bigger picture behind it was to help Chinese youth picture themselves as part of the international community and foster their sense of being a global citizen within the irresistible trend of globalization.
Research Question # 2: How did the OE programs integrate with the Chinese educational and social context? How were the educational and cultural programs conducted in primary and secondary schools?

The implementation of OE programs in Beijing was considered a combined effort of the government and people. Chronologically, a school-based OE program was pioneered by a volunteer group at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School. The grass-root initiation of OE by the people experienced numerous difficulties including inadequate financial backup, little authoritative support and limited social recognition. However intriguing and inspiring their OE programs were, the initial attempts were very much limited within one school. Likewise, OE did not start to spread on a large scale until the launching of the government-sponsored OE programs in the end of 2005, and it finally peaked in 2007 and 2008. The official endeavor targeted children and students in elementary and secondary schools and was primarily constructed around the OE Model School and the Heart-to-Heart Partnership program.

Noticeably, it was the national Education Commission, multiple municipal education departments and the Olympic Education Standing Office affiliated with the Beijing municipal Commission of Education that took the leading responsibility to plan, implement and supervise OE programs in schools, not BOCOG. During the actual implementation of OE programs, a collaborative relationship was developed between the government and the people. This relationship was interdependent as the people’s voluntary attempts provided the initial model and valuable experiences for conducting OE programs in schools, and the government’s support enabled OE to spread on a nationwide scale.

It also constantly reminds us that the way the OE project was organized and implemented needs to be understood within China’s unique social and political climates. On one hand, the centralized political system and the way in which Chinese society is constructed secured the way for OE to be implemented under the impetus of extremely powerful administrative
orders. It guaranteed financial support, human resources and most importantly provided the precondition for OE to spread so quickly through multiple administrative levels. On the other hand, however, the educational nature of OE programs was identified to be somewhat lost in the blind pursuit of fulfilling the administrative orders. Also, with the repeal of these administrative orders after the Olympic Games concluded in 2008, the official OE programs almost inevitably disappeared overnight. Therefore, the Olympic Games provided OE with a legitimized role to be implemented during a certain period and also carried it away. The motive to fulfill the administrative orders explained the difficult genesis of the grass-root OE endeavor; it both enabled and constrained the implementation of OE in China. To this end, the educational legacies of the largest campaign in OE history were unresolved and left to be explored in the future.

*Research Question # 3: What were the students’ experiences of the OE programs? What did they want to achieve through participating in the program?*

From this part on, the focal point of this thesis transferred to the students who were close to the OE programs. Six students were interviewed and strong emphasis was given to their narratives regarding their experiences participating in OE activities. Likewise, the way students conceptualized OE was primarily built upon their frustrations towards the current educational system, which they accused of being exam-oriented, incredibly competitive and lacking in freedom and fun. As opposed to being inhibited and restrained on multiple levels in previous formal education, students maintained that OE had the potential to 1) incorporate new materials that could intrigue their interest to learn; 2) introduce novel pedagogy that offered them the opportunities to learn through numerous activities; 3) build up role models in real life for them to learn from, and 4) refresh their understandings of PE and actively engage them in various sports and physical activities.

*Research Question # 4: What kind of legacies has OE left for China, and what kinds of impact have OE programs made upon the children and youth who received it?*
As the beneficiaries of OE, students believed that in contrast to traditional education which solely addresses academic performance, engaging in OE activities contributed to their integrated development including academic, physical and moral education as a whole. Through their participation, they were granted more freedom in terms of class design, event planning, and so on, and their levels of self-confidence and self-esteem were significantly increased. More importantly, the student population confirmed the previous aspirations of OE by outlining the changes they discovered in communicating and interacting with foreigners. Participating in OE activities was seen as a bridge between the students themselves and the outside world. To be sure, OE did bring vitality and dynamism to China’s education and instill Chinese students with new ideas and possible changes in power relations at school. Nonetheless, it lasted too briefly. Therefore, in the end, the student sample offered advice for future OE program designers and expressed genuine hope that the essential idea of OE be carried out under other forms in Chinese schools.

5.2. Limitations

This thesis tried to unpack both narratives from OE project designers and its recipients. However, there is no straightforward way to evaluate the intangible legacies once and for all. The students’ articulations can only reflect their perceptions of a certain period of time while some long-term influences generated from OE might not yet have emerged. A knowledge gap still exists in the lack of detailed qualitative studies to unveil the more far-reaching impact that mega-events have on their participants, and it is therefore, left for future researchers to explore.

Given that the implementation of OE programs stopped along with the closure of the Beijing Olympic Games four years ago, the stories told by students about their experiences participating in OE programs relied entirely on their memories. Given that some memories might be vague or too far to recall, they would inevitably affect the accuracy and reliability
of the research results. Moreover, this student sample was recruited from one OE model school only. Therefore, their experiences of OE shared comparability but also illuminated a lack of variety.

Lastly and unfortunately, I was unable to recruit students who participated in OE programs both before and after December 2005, since this student population is now in high school and could spare no time for activities other than studying in preparation for the college entrance exams. Therefore, the voices of students who participated in both the unofficial and government-sponsored OE programs were missing in this thesis and surely need to be addressed in future research to provide essential comparisons.

5.3. Recommendations

This thesis aims to address recommendations to a variety of audiences:

**Recommendations for future researchers**

Within current academic research about the modern Olympic Movement, it is obvious that studies about the intangible legacies receive too little attention. Official reports that touch upon OE programs were mostly descriptive and rarely demonstrated any signs of follow-up studies that targeting the students’ experiences beyond these educational programs. Therefore, future studies are needed to direct our attention to the organizing and evaluating of educational programs generated by mega-events, such as the Olympic Games. Particularly, the voices of the program participants should definitely be included and given top priority.

**Recommendations for Olympic Games organizing committees/governments**
A detailed and effective Monitoring and Evaluation mechanism needs to be created and/or adopted by the organizing committees in the planning, even bidding process of the Olympic Games. In order to systematically implement and measure the educational outcome of certain OE programs, specific indicators need to be set out clearly in advance, such as the common goals that OE aims to achieve and factors for evaluation. Continuous actions should also be made during the ongoing process of conducting OE to inspect the operation and efficiency of certain programs, as well as to figure out what particular approaches achieve the greatest outcome and what does not. Corresponding changes should also be made immediately to address it.

Moreover, educational program designers should always be aware that there does not have to be a unified format to follow in developing OE programs. They need to bear in mind that the OE programs should be planned and conducted in accordance with the social, cultural and even political environment of the host country and always address the students’ own needs in developing an educational project. Also, if opportunities permit, OE should be situated into the national/provincial education system and incorporate the evaluation process of OE programs into the larger picture of social legacies generated by the Olympic Games to earn more recognition and inspire potential reforms.

**Recommendations for Chinese school administrators and education practitioners**

In the particular case of China, I would first and foremost strongly urge the school authorities and educators to review the first-hand narratives provided by the students in this thesis, especially the part where students addressed their frustrations and the deficiencies inherent to the education system. They should find an effective way to figure out what the students really want at school and start to make changes to address these needs. For example, they should create a suggestion box or an online portal that could offer a platform for students to express their ideas, perceptions and recommendations for school-based policies.
and programs anonymously. After carefully reviewing the students’ perceptions and validation, select constructive suggestions and ideas, draft a report and send it to upper level education supervisors or officials in educational departments to guide future practice. If urging for change is too much to ask at this point, I would simply ask the school administration and education policy makers to start to care about the students’ need and their experiences at schools. Since little attention had been given to OE by either Chinese media or academia after the Beijing Games concluded, I intend to prepare Chinese-language articles from the thesis and present the findings at conferences with Chinese audiences, including government officials, PE teachers, and education practitioners.

Also, please keep in mind that students’ pursuit of academic perfection does not equate to a need to sacrifice their physical and social development. On the contrary, this balance is identified to be more often lost in the misleading and misconduct of certain school policies and inadequate positive education for the students. Effective moves should be directed towards granting PE and other real extra-curriculum activities with more credit. Moreover, offer students more time outside the classroom and reform the traditional didactic teaching and learning pattern. Lastly, more nuanced pedagogies should be initiated and employed to diversify teaching methods that could really engage the students by intriguing their interest in learning. By exploring the above recommendations, the ultimate goal for every education practitioner to pursue would be cultivating students with rich knowledge, strong bodies, beautiful minds and decent personalities—the genuine well-rounded qualities, to secure brilliant futures for them.

5.4. Concluding Notes

I hope that this thesis sheds some light on both the general conceptualization and concrete implementation of OE programs on a domestic level. The findings suggest that the Beijing Olympic Games provided a brief moment for OE programs to be conducted in Chinese
schools, during which students embraced both new knowledge and pedagogy. OE is believed to have filled the gap where traditional curriculum education failed by empowering the students and offering them more freedom and power. The biggest strength of OE lies in the fact that significant emphases were given to students’ experiences, feelings, and their interests when participating in concrete activities. Also, it is noticeable that OE in China was primarily a government-led program, with BOCOG, academic experts and numerous volunteers providing expertise and substantial assistance. This unique relationship reflects the Chinese political and social contexts; it also both enables and constrains the implementation of OE programs effectively and continuously. In the end, the findings and analysis of this thesis recommend that future organizing committees continue to search for a holistic mechanism to implement OE and establish an efficient and effective evaluation system in their local country. This thesis also urges school administrators and education practitioners in China and other countries to incorporate new pedagogies into traditional curriculum schooling and provide the participants with the more essential and sustainable educational legacies that OE has to offer.
References


GutsMuths, J. C. F. (1800) Gymnastics for youth: Or a practical guide to healthful and amusing exercises for the use of school: An essay toward the necessary. General Books LLC.


*Research Ethics*. Lecture notes of the research ethics workshop at the University of Toronto.


Primary interview questions will cover the following areas:

1. A brief history of OE in China and how the interviewees became involved.
2. The participants’ role in organizing and implementing OE when the program was running.
3. The mission and goals of OE and the ways in which the actual OE programs worked to address these goals.
4. The participants’ experience with OE.
5. The participants’ familiarity with Olympism.
6. The interviewees’ perception of how to situate the OE program into the larger context of the Beijing’s Olympic Games.
7. The interviewees’ perception of influences OE had on students.
8. If the participants feel that OE can be used as a tool to promote more active and healthier lifestyle among students.
9. Expected/unexpected outcomes of the OE program thus far.
10. The interviewees’ perceptions about whether OE should be continued after the Games were concluded.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Interviewees (Pseudonyms)</th>
<th>Interview Questions</th>
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| Prof. Zhao (University professor) | 1. How did you first learn about Olympic education? What did you want to achieve from spreading Olympic education?  
2. Why do you call you and your team grass-root Olympic education promotion team? How do you feel to work... |
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<th>Question</th>
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| with/without the “official help” when you were implementing the actual programs? | 3. What do you think is the most important mission for Olympic education to achieve? And how did you achieve it?  
4. What kind of strategies did you employ to ensure the actual education outcomes of your program?  
5. Are you planning to continue Olympic education after the Games? If yes, what did you do in these three years? |
| Mr. Li  
(Government employee in the Beijing Municipal Education Commission) | 1. What is the relationship between the Olympic Education Standing Office (Office) and BOCOG?  
2. What role did the Office play in disseminating Olympic education in China? What kind of work did the Office do?  
3. What was the primary strategy to assure the educational goal that Olympic education to target the “400 million” Chinese youngsters?  
4. The office was disbanded in 2009, does that mean the mission of Olympic education has been completed and fulfilled? |
| Dr. Thomas  
(Foreign University Professor) | 1. As a foreign scholar, how do you situate yourself when you were involving within Beijing’s Olympic education programs?  
2. What do you think is the most significant quality of Beijing’s Olympic education program? What makes it different from its previous counterparts? What do you think is the major strength/weakness of the Olympic education program? Why?  
3. As the translator of the final Olympic education report, would you consider it has included every truth compared to what you experienced in your field research?  
4. What do you think is the major strength/weakness of the Olympic education program? Why?  
5. Would you consider the program successful or unsuccessful? Why is that? |
| Mr. Zhang  
(Primary school PE teacher) | 1. How did you react when you first learned about Olympic education? What made you accept Prof.Zhao’s Olympic education proposal in 2001?  
2. What pushed you through all the difficulties and misunderstandings during the initiative years when you were implementing the programs?  
3. How did the students react to the programs? Were |
there any differences before and after the school authorities get involved?
4. What strategies did you use to ensure equality and equity among students in terms of receiving Olympic education program?
5. What kind of influences did the Olympic educational program cast on students’ other aspect of life (e.g., physical (in) activity, self-esteem, sense of worth and life attitude)?

| Mr. Wang (Junior high school PE teacher) | 1. How long have you been involved in Olympic education program? What was your role in it?
  2. What particular strategies did you employ to get your students participate in the program?
  3. What were your students’ reactions and attitude to the Olympic education program? Why?
  4. How did the school authority treat the program? What effort did the school make to integrate Olympic education with traditional curriculum education?
  5. How long did the Olympic education program last in your school? Did you make any particular effort after the Games to continue Olympic education? |

Is there anything you would like to ask me?

Are there any other interesting stories/details/thoughts you would like to share?

Feel free to add anything to our discussion.
Empowering Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and evaluation of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games

My name is Chang Liu, and I am a graduate student in the Department of Exercise Sciences in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education at the University of Toronto. As part of my Masters’ thesis, I am conducting research under the supervision of Dr. Bruce Kidd in the Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education. I am inviting you to participate in my study entitled: “Empowering Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and evaluation of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games”.

The Research Project: The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Olympism has been employed as an educational tool in the broader context of the modern Olympic Movement, with a specific focus on the school-based Olympic education (OE) programs implemented in the Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Games. I will identify how the educational mandate of Olympism has been interpreted, enforced and supported by the Beijing Organizing Committee for the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) by examining the OE programs conducted in local elementary and secondary schools. I also hope to evaluate the effect of the school-based OE programs both from top-down perspective (i.e., how did BOCOG fulfill the educational mandate of hosting the Olympic Games in local schools) and bottom-up perspective (i.e., what were the students’ experiences in those OE programs and what kind of impact did OE generate on them).

Details of Your Participation: As you have been heavily involved with planning and conducting the OE programs before and during the Beijing Olympic Games, I would like to invite you to participate in an interview about your experiences and perceptions towards the program. If you agree to participate, the interviews will be arranged at a time and place most convenient to you and will be completed within one hour. The interview questions have been designed to gather information related
to how OE was designed, implemented and engaged with Beijing’s local students, as well as your role and thoughts on the project.

All information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Your interview will be recorded on audio-tape with your permission. Please note that you may choose not to have the interview audio-taped, but still continue to participate in the research (written records will be secured – see below). Even if you consent to having your interview audio-taped, you are free to request that the recorder be turned off at any point in the interview or to request that certain recorded information be removed. At any time, you may decline to answer any question. Any information you disclose during the interview will not be reported on an individual basis to anyone, including your superiors and other study participants.

It is important to note that your participation is completely voluntary. Your choice to agree or decline to participate in this study will be respected and kept confidential. Your role and relationships with the researcher, and within any organization that you are currently associated with, will not be affected in any way through your participation in this study, or by your decision to not participate. You may withdraw from the study at any time and have all data pertaining to you destroyed, also without any penalty to you.

Please note that you will not receive any financial compensation from participating in my study. However, in recognition of your potential contribution to my research, I will provide you with a small souvenir (University of Toronto pin or key chain). Healthy snacks and refreshment will also be provided by me during our conversation. Please notify me in advance if you have any allergies.

Privacy & Confidentiality: Unless otherwise indicated by you, all information obtained in this study will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. Raw data from interview transcriptions will be saved in a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick. Each participant will be assigned a pseudonym that will be used to identify interview notes and/or audiotapes of the interviews. One list that matches pseudonyms with the names of participants will be kept in a locked security box. I, Chang Liu, will remain the sole key-holder to this box, and will be the only person with access to the raw data and numerical participant codes. Also, no
personally identifying information will be used in the written work or presentation of this material. Data will be stored until the project has been evaluated, at which time it will be destroyed. Computer files will be deleted and paper files will be shredded.

I will be the only person who has access to your information (name, position, affiliation, etc) which ensures your confidentiality in participating in this study. However, please also be aware that your identity might be identified by "indirect identifiers" to figure out who you are and be associated with the views you express. Options are left completely open to you that you can choose to 1) participate in this research as named; 2) fully aware of the possibilities that you might be identified but still participate; 3) withdraw at anytime during the research or not to participate. I fully respect your choice of participation and any information you are willing to share with me. Your participation is completely voluntary.

The Products: The data from this research will provide the basis for a study of the OE program in schools in Beijing, which will function as a central feature of my Master's research thesis. You will be consulted throughout the research process for feedback on matters pertaining to the analysis and representation of data generated through our communication and will be provided with both a summary of the research findings and a copy of the final thesis upon completion. Other possible research products might include academic conference presentations and scholarly articles.

Please read the consent form carefully. Again, there are no known risks with participation in this study. If you have any questions about what will be involved, please contact me (Chang Liu) by email or phone. My email address and phone number are at the bottom of this consent letter. If you agree to participate, please sign on the following page. Also, should you have any questions concerning your rights as a participant in this study, please contact the Office of Research Ethics of the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or +1-416-946-3273.

I look forward to speaking with you in the near future!
Your time and help are very much appreciated,

Chang Liu, B.A, M.Sc Student

I understand that any involvement in the interview will last no more than 1 hour at a
time and take place on a date convenient to me. I am aware that my participation is
voluntary and I may withdraw at any time, without fear of penalty. If I do withdraw,
interview transcripts of my interview will be destroyed, and my decision to withdraw
will be kept confidential to minimize any negative perceptions from peers. I have
retained a copy of this letter for my files.

I understand that all information collected in this research will be used for research
reasons only and that interview audio-tapes will only be available to Chang Liu. I
understand that my privacy and real name will be protected at all times during the
research by using my pseudonym on audio-tape labels, in all research reports and in
presentations if I am quoted or discussed.

I understand raw data from interview transcriptions will be kept confidential and
saved in a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick.

I, ___________________________, agree to participate in an interview for the
project on “Employing Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and
evaluation of the school based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic
Games”.

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I, ____________________________, agree/ do not agree to this interview being audio-taped (please circle appropriate response).

Signature: __________________________________

Date: ______________________________________

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您好，我叫刘畅，我是一名多伦多大学体育与运动学院的研究生，我的导师是布鲁斯·基德博士。我的硕士毕业论文研究题目是“奥林匹克主义在教育中的实施—北京奥运会奥林匹克学校教育的评估研究”。为了完成该论文，我希望邀请您参与一个简短的访谈。

我的主要研究问题是北京奥组委如何在当地中小学中实施推广奥教方案，以及如何评估这一教育方案的实施效果。具体来说，我会从自上而下（即北京奥组委如何履行和实施奥林匹克学校教育任务）和自下而上（即研究学生接受奥教的经验和故事，以及奥教对学生产生的影响）这两个角度进行研究。

因为我曾经在北京奥教工作实施运行过程中的参与与贡献，我想邀请您参与一个简短的访谈来谈谈您的经历与看法。如果您同意参加，采访将安排在您最方便的时间和地点，并会在一小时之内完成。您将会被问到有关奥教活动在北京中小学中的设计以及实施工作，以及您的亲身参与经历和看法。

在这项研究中获得的所有信息都将严格保密，您的参与也是匿名的。如果您同意，我将用录音机录下我们的对话，您可以在录音的过程中要求我关掉录音机或删抹掉任何特定信息和录音。当然，您也可以选择不被录音而继续参加研究。在整个采访过程中的任何时候，您可以拒绝回答任何问题。任何您透露任何信息都不会报告给任何人，包括您的上司、同事及其他研究参与者。请您理解，我的研究过程及结果不会给您带来任何风险和麻烦，您的参与是完全自愿的。无论您的选择是参与或拒绝，我都将给予尊重和保密。即使您同意参与，您也可以在任何时候退出，并要求销毁所有与您有关的资料，您的决定不会给您带来任何消极影响。

除非另有说明，在这项研究中获得的所有信息将严格保密。采访中获得的原始资料将被保存在加密的计算机或我的个人U盘上。我会运用化名描述您的参与与角色以此保护您的隐私。我作为这项研究的唯一研究者，也是唯一可以接触到原始资料和数据人。然而，需要您注意的是，您表述的观点以及您在奥教事业中作出的贡献，也可能会被间接地与您的身份相联系，导致除我之外的个人或群体获悉您的身份。鉴于您在奥教中作为突出贡献，以及您学者/公共事业积极参与者的身份，您可以选择1）以您的真实身份参与我的研究；2）充分认识到您的身份可能被披露但仍然参与研究；3）不参与这次研究或在研究过程中退出。我完全尊重您的选择并尊重任何您愿意/不愿意与我分享的信息。您的参与是完全自愿的。此外，任何个人信息、数
据和资料将被保存直到该论文的完成，届时将被销毁。纸质资料和计算机上的文件也会被销毁和删除。

您在本研究中的参与不会获得任何金钱形式的报酬。然而，作为对您的参与和潜在贡献的感谢，研究者（我本人）将为您提供小礼物（如多伦多大学徽章或钥匙链），并会为您提供健康的零食或饮料。如果您有任何食物过敏，请提前告知我。

我将在整个研究分析过程中与您保持联系以获取反馈。如果您有兴趣或需要，我会给您提供一份我的数据资料分析结果，并在论文完成时赠与您一份我的硕士毕业论文。我与您的交流内容还有可能被运用在其他学术会议的报告或学术论文中。

请您仔细阅读这封知情同意书。我要再次强调的是，您的参与是完全自愿并且不涉及任何潜在风险的。如果您有任何问题，请通过电子邮件和电话联系我或我的导师（邮箱地址及电话见下）。 如果您同意参加我的研究，请您在这份知情同意书上签名。如果您有进一步的问题和顾虑，您还可以联系多伦多大学研究伦理办公室，他们的邮箱地址是 ethics.review@utoronto.ca，电话是+1-416-946-3273。

非常感谢您所花费的时间和帮助，我期待与您的对话。

此致敬礼。

刘畅

我理解我的参与是完全自愿的，我可以随时退出而不用担心有任何消极后果。采访将被安排在一个对我最方便的时间和地点，并不会超过一个小时。如果我退出采访，我提供的信息将被销毁，我退出的决定也将予以保密。我保留了这封信的副本。

我理解在本研究中收集到的所有信息将只被运用于学术研究，采访音频和其他资料将只提供给研究者刘畅。我理解我在本研究中将不会被提供化名，如果我提供的资料被引用，我的隐私和真实姓名将不会被泄露。我所提供的资料和信息会被保存在计算机和加密 U 盘中。

我___________________________，同意参加这次采访，来完成题为“奥林匹克主义在教育中的实施—北京奥运会奥林匹克学校教育的评估研究”的研究。
我___________________________，同意/不同意本次采访被录音 （请圈出您的选择）。

签名：______________________________

日期：______________________________

联系信息:

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APPENDIX C1- Email sent by myself—Requesting Recruitment

(English Version)

Hi

My name is Chang Liu, and I am a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. I am aware that Yang Fangdian Central Primary School was doing an excellent job in implementing and promoting Olympic education (OE) before and during the Beijing Olympics. Also, I learned from your previous PE teacher, Mr Zhang, that you actively participated in various OE programs while you were a student at that school, and I obtained your email address from the student directory that you signed when you graduated. I am interested in investigating how the OE programs were conducted in schools and what impacts the programs had generate on students who received it. Therefore, I wonder if you would like to participate in a study that I am conducting as part of my graduate degree. Your experiences and perceptions about the Olympic education program will provide a very valuable resource to my research.

If you think this is something that you would be interested in, I am inviting you to participate in a storytelling process with me. It is like a casual talk that will last about 30 minutes. I will need 5 to 7 student participants in this study and participants will be recruited at a first come, first serve basis. My hope is that you reply to me at fisher.liu@utoronto.ca if you are interested in participating, so that I can respond with the information package that I have prepared. If this is something that you think you would be interested in — great! If not, that is fine too. Please let me know.

Thank you for your time and with all best wishes,

Chang Liu, BA, MSc Student

Department of Exercise Sciences
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education
University of Toronto
APPENDIX C2- Email sent by myself—Requesting Recruitment

(Chinese Version)

附录 C2：邀请参与研究邮件

你好，我叫刘畅，我是多伦多大学的一名研究生。我了解到羊坊店中心小学在北京奥运会前后开展了丰富多彩的奥林匹克教育活动。并且你的小学体育老师张老师告诉我你曾经积极参与了那些奥林匹克教育活动。我从你们的毕业同学录中得到了你的电子邮件地址。我对这个话题非常感兴趣，特别是奥林匹克教育活动在学校中是怎样实施的，以及这些活动对你和你的同学造成了哪些影响，我的硕士毕业论文也是对奥林匹克教育的研究。所以我想邀请你参加一个简短的采访（不超过 30 分钟）来谈谈你的经历和故事，这将为我的论文提供非常宝贵的素材。我将需要 5 至 7 名学生参与者，每位参与者将会按照回复的时间顺序被招募进我的研究。如果你感兴趣并愿意参加，请给我发一封邮件，我将给你提供有关我的研究的进一步的资料。我的邮箱地址是 fisher.liu@utoronto.ca。如果你不想参加，也没有关系，我完全理解。

谢谢你的时间，祝好。

刘畅
APPENDIX C3- Email Response to Potential Student Participants (English Version)

Hi,

Thank you very much for showing interest in my study. I have attached an information package for you to review. Within the package is a

i. Research Protocol

ii. Letter of Assent; and

iii. Letter of Consent

The research protocol will give you some basic information on the study. I tried to outline the study to the best of my ability but if you are unsure about anything, please do not hesitate to ask. I want you to feel free to question the information so that there is no surprise in the communication process.

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you do decide to participate, I will need you to return the Letters of Assent and Consent. The Letter of Assent is for you to authorize your involvement in the study. The Letter of Consent is for a parent/guardian to sign – this is required in doing research with any individual under the legal age of consent. Should you decide to participate, you can quit the study at any time without explanation and penalty of any kind. It is entirely at your discretion.

Please let me know if you are interested in participating by ………………………………… so that I can add your name/email address to my mailing list and you can receive further information.
Thank you for your time and with all best wishes,

If more than 7 students show interests in participating in my study, the following email will be sent to apologize, express my gratitude, and gently decline their offer.

Hi,

Thank you very much for your reply and your interest in participating in my study. However, due to the predetermined sample size, I will only need 7 student participants, and I am sorry to inform you that I have already obtained all potential participants. I am really grateful that you offered to participate; it means a lot to me. Your time and kindness are greatly appreciated. I wish you all the best in your study and life.

Chang Liu, BA, MSc Student
Department of Exercise Sciences
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education
University of Toronto
你好。非常感谢你的回复和你对我的研究课题的兴趣。这封邮件的附录里有一系列资料，包括研究实施方案，未成年人同意书以及家长/监护人同意书。

研究实施方案中提供了有关我的研究课题的基本信息，如果你有任何问题，请务必联系我，我将尽力为你解答，这样也确保了我们之后沟通的流畅性。

你的参与是完全自愿的。如果你决定参加，我将需要你交回未成年人同意书和家长/监护人同意书。未成年人同意书的目的是得到你本人的授权并表示愿意参与这项研究。因为你不到法定成年年龄18岁，我将需要你的家长或监护人签署家长/监护人同意书。你的参与不会给你带来任何消息后果，如果你决定参加，你也有权利在任何时候退出，并且不用提供任何解释。

如果你决定参加，请在如下日期前………………………………告知我，这样我将给你发送更多的信息。

非常感谢你的时间，祝好。

如果多于7名学生回复邮件表示愿意参与研究，下面这封邮件将回复给这些同学，我会在邮件中表示对他们的感谢以及无法让他们参与研究的歉意。

你好，非常感谢你的回复并愿意参与我的研究。然而，由于提前设定的参与人数，现阶段我只需要7名学生参与到我的研究中，并且我已经得到了7名同学的回复。对于你提出的帮助我表示非常感谢。祝你在今后的学习和生活中一切顺利。

祝好，

刘畅
APPENDIX D1- Student Participation Letter of Assent (English Version)

Empowering Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and evaluation of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games

My name is Chang Liu, and I am a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. I am doing a research study about the Olympic education (OE) program conducted in Beijing’s elementary and secondary schools, and I am interested in what kind of impact OE had generate on students who received it. Since you were heavily involved within this program, I would like to invite you to have a conversation with me to talk about your experiences and perspective on it. By listening to your feedback, I hope that I can gain access to your experience with a program – that was intended for you. The information you provide will help me understand the effectiveness of the program, and be used to generate future recommendations.

I want to hear your opinion on this issue as your view is extremely important – not only to me but to those people devoted to creating and implementing a program that was intended for your betterment. This research has been approved by the University of Toronto Research Ethics Boards. Please know that your involvement in this study is voluntary. It is completely up to you to decide whether you want to take part or not. If for any reason, you do not want to take part in this study that is entirely fine, you do not have to. If you decide to take part, you will be free to drop out at any time without having to offer any explanation. If you drop out you will not experience any negative consequence. Your participation is completely voluntary.

Storytelling is like a non-structured interview or a casual talk. You can feel free to share your experiences and perspective about the OE program that you were participating in. If you are willing participate in this interview with me, it will be scheduled sometime in May, 2012. It should take about half an hour, depending on the amount of information you would like to share, and will be scheduled at a time and place that is the most convenient for you. If you decide to take part, your input will be kept private, and will not be shared with anyone else. The communication will
be tape-recorded (you can choose not to be tape-recorded, that is fine, too), transcribed and given a pseudonym (you can create your own pseudonym if you wish) so that your identity is kept confidential. Copies of your transcripts will be stored on a password protected computer, and if printed, kept in a locked cabinet at my office at the University of Toronto.

Please note that you will not receive any financial compensation from participating in my study. However, in recognition of your potential contribution to my research, I will provide you with a small souvenir (University of Toronto pin or key chain). Healthy snacks and refreshment will also be provided by me during our conversation. Please notify me in advance if you have any allergies.

I would also like you to take home the parental information letter that is attached to this letter and give it to one of your parents or legal guardians. Although this study does not involve any known risks, we would encourage you to discuss your involvement with your parents/guardians. For you to take part in this study, please have your parent/guardian sign their letter and bring it with you. You will also need to sign this Letter of Assent which will confirm your desire to participate in the study. So in short, if you decide to participate, you need to bring the Letter of Assent (signed by you) and the Letter of Consent (signed by your parent/guardian) on the day of your communication with me.

Again, there are no known risks with participation in this study. If you have any questions about what is involved, please contact me (Chang Liu) by email or phone. My email address and phone number are at the bottom of this page. You can also contact the Office of Research Ethics of the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or +1-416-946-3273 if you have any questions or concerns.

I look forward to speaking with you in the near future!

Your time and help are very much appreciated,
Chang Liu, B.A, M.Sc Student

I understand that any involvement in the interview will last about half an hour at a time and a place that will be convenient to me. I am aware that my participation is voluntary and I may withdraw at any time, without fear of penalty. If I do withdraw, transcripts of my participation will be destroyed, and my decision to withdraw will be kept confidential to minimize any negative perceptions from peers. I have retained a copy of this letter for my files.

I understand that all information collected in this research will be used for research reasons only and that audio-tapes will only be available to Chang Liu. I understand that my privacy and real name will be protected at all times during the research by using my pseudonym on audio-tape labels, in all research reports and in presentations if I am quoted or discussed.

I understand raw data from storytelling transcriptions will be kept confidential and saved in a password protected computer and on an encrypted USB memory stick.

I, ___________________________, agree to participate in a storytelling for the project on “Employing Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and evaluation of the school based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games”. 
I, ____________________________, agree/ do not agree to this storytelling process being audio-taped (please circle appropriate response).

Signature: ________________________________

Date: ________________________________

For more information, please contact:

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fisher.liu@utoronto.ca

Dr. Bruce Kidd  
Research Supervisor  
55 Harbord Street  
Faculty of Kinesiology and Physical Education  
Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5S2W6  
+1-416-978-2436  
bruce.kidd@utoronto.ca
你好。我叫刘畅，我是加拿大多伦多大学的一名硕士研究生。我在做一项研究来完成我的硕士毕业论文，内容是有关北京奥运会中奥林匹克教育（奥教）活动在北京中小学中的实施，我的研究重点是奥教活动给中小学生带来的影响。鉴于你曾经积极参与并接受过奥教的各项活动，我想邀请你参与一个简短的采访来谈谈你的经历和观点。你所提供的信息可以帮助我更好的理解北京奥教活动的实施情况。请放心我的这项研究已经通过了多伦多大学研究伦理办公室的审批。你的决定是完全自愿的。如果出于任何原因你不想参与我的采访，我完全理解。如果你决定参与而想在中途退出，也是完全可以的，你不需要提供任何解释，也不会承担任何后果。

我的主要研究方法是讲故事，就好像我们两个人随便聊聊天一样。如果你想要参与，我将会在2012年的5月安排我们的采访，届时你可以分享你的经历和观点。我们的对话会持续半小时左右，取决于你想提供的信息量，并将安排在一个对你最方便的时间和地点。如果你决定参与，你的参与过程是完全保密的，我会跟任何人以任何目的提及。我将用录音机记录下我们的对话过程，（你可以选择被录音）之后进行转录分析，并给你一个化名来保护你的隐私（你也可以自己给自己起一个化名）。我将把你所提供的任何信息都保存在一台密码保护的电脑上，任何纸质资料会保存在我办公室的保险箱中。

你在本研究中的参与不会获得任何金钱形式的报酬。然而，作为对你的参与和潜在贡献的感谢，研究者（我本人）将会为你提供小礼物（如多伦多大学徽章或钥匙链），并会为你提供健康的零食或饮料。如果你有任何食物过敏，请提前告知我。

同时，我需要你把这封信中附带的家长/监护人同意书带回家，给你的家长或监护人签署。虽然我的这项研究对你不存在任何潜在风险，我还是鼓励你跟家长说明并讨论你的参与，并征得他们的同意。所以，我需要你签署这封信来表示你想参加我的研究的意愿，同时需要你家长或监护人的授权。请在我们见面的当天把这两封信同时交还给我。

我要再次强调的是，你的参与是完全自愿并且不涉及到任何潜在风险的。如果你有任何问题，请通过电子邮件或电话联系我或我的导师（邮箱地址及电话见下）。如果你同意参加我的研究，请您在这份未成年人同意书上签名。如果你有进一步的问题和顾虑，您还可以联系多伦多大学研究伦理办公室，他们的邮箱地址是ethics.review@utoronto.ca，电话是+1-416-946-3273。
非常感谢你的时间和帮助，我期待与你的对话。

此致敬礼。

刘畅

我理解我的参与是完全自愿的，我可以随时退出而不用担心有任何消极后果。采访将被安排在一个对我最方便的时间和地点，并不会超过半个小时。如果我退出采访，我提供的信息将被销毁，我退出的决定也将予以保密。我保留了这封信的副本。

我理解在本研究中收集到的所有信息将只被用于学术研究，采访音频和其他资料将只提供给研究者刘畅。我理解我在本研究中将被提供化名，如果我提供的资料被引用，我的隐私和真实姓名将不会被泄露。我所提供的资料和信息会被保存在计算机和加密U盘中。

我______________________, 同意参加这次采访，来完成题为“奥林匹克主义在教育中的实施—北京奥运会奥林匹克学校教育的评估研究”的研究。

我______________________, 同意/不同意本次采访被录音（请圈出您的选择）。

167
签名：______________________________

日期: ______________________________

联系信息：

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bruce.kidd@utoronto.ca
Dear Parent/Guardian,

My name is Chang Liu, and I am a graduate student at the University of Toronto, Toronto, Canada. I am conducting a research project on students' perception of the Olympic education (OE) programs– a school-based program implemented by the Organizing Committee of the Games of the XXIX Olympiad (BOCOG) and the Ministry of Education from 2005 to 2008. I am interested in what impacts this program had generate on its recipients. To do so, I would like to invite your child to participate in a storytelling process with me to learn about his/her experiences and perspectives. If your child is interested, I will be asking him/her to conduct a casual interview with me that will last approximately half an hour – depending on how much information he/she wishes to share – in May 2012. The communication will be scheduled at his/her earliest convenience and at a place that works the best for him/her.

At no point during the study will a question be asked that is intrusive in nature and there are no known risks associated with students’ involved in this study. Student participation is entirely voluntary, and even if students initially choose to take part in this study they may subsequently withdraw at any time without having to give any reason and without experiencing any negative consequences.

If you have any questions about what is involved, please contact me (Chang Liu) or my supervisor at the University of Toronto by email or phone. Our email addresses and phone numbers are at the bottom of this page. You can also contact the Office of Research Ethics of the University of Toronto at ethics.review@utoronto.ca or +1-416-946-3273 if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you for your understanding and help.
To confirm the participation of your child in this study please sign below and return it to the researcher:

I allow my child, …………………………………………………… (Name of Student) to take part in the research investigating students’ perceptions of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games, as outlined in the attached letter.

Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________

For more information, please contact:

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+1-416-978-2436
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尊敬的家长/监护人:

您好。我叫刘畅，我是加拿大多伦多大学体育与运动机能学院的一名研究生。作为我硕士毕业论文的课题，我在做一项有关北京奥林匹克教育的研究。北京奥组委和北京市教委在 2005 年至 2008 年期间在北京市中小学内普及奥林匹克教育（奥教），我的研究目的是挖掘奥教活动对中小学生产生的影响。您的孩子作为这项教育活动的一名受益者，我希望邀请他/她参加与我的一个简短的采访来谈谈他/她在奥教活动中的经历和感受。如果您的孩子感兴趣参与与我的对话，我将在 2012 年 5 月安排一天进行采访，整个对话过程不会超过 30 分钟，并会按照他/她的意愿安排具体时间地点。

您的孩子参与是不存在任何潜在风险的。他们的参与是完全自愿的，我不会在交流过程中对他们进行任何干扰。即使您的孩子最初选择参加我的采访，他们也可以在中途任何时候退出，而无需给与任何理由，也不会承担任何消极后果。

如果你有任何问题，请通过电子邮件或电话联系我或我的导师（邮箱地址及电话见下）。如果您有进一步的问题和顾虑，您还可以联系多伦多大学研究伦理办公室，他们的邮箱地址是 ethics.review@utoronto.ca，电话是+1-416-946-3273。

非常感谢您的理解和支持。

此致敬礼。

刘畅
如果您同意您的孩子参加我的研究，请您在这份家长/监护人同意书上签名。

我同意我的孩子 ………………………………………………………（学生姓名）参加题目为“奥林匹克主义在教育中的实施—北京奥运会奥林匹克学校教育的评估研究”的研究。

签名：____________________________

日期: ____________________________

联系信息:

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APPENDIX F1- Research Protocol (English Version)

Employing Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and evaluation of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games

Purpose of Study: To examine and evaluate the Olympic education (OE) program conducted in schools before and during the Beijing Olympic Games by learning about the students’ experiences and perceptions about the program.

Participants: Students (aged 14-17, Grades 8-10) who were at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School, Beijing, China, where they received and experienced OE and Olympic-related cultural programs, will be invited to participate in this study. The only inclusion/exclusion criteria required of this study is that participants should have participated in the OE project and be able to comprehend and sign the research consent form. Participation in this study is completely voluntary.

Recruitment: Once ethical approval has been obtained from the Research Ethics Boards at the University of Toronto, permission to contact the student participants will be sought via Mr. Zhou Chenguang, a PE teacher at Yang Fangdian Central Primary School. An email will be sent to potential participants from Mr. Zhou on my behalf to encourage anyone interested to contact the researcher. The student body will be made aware of the research project through the email which will outline the purpose of the study and detail of involvement.

Informed consent: Students interested in participating in the study will be sent an information package including an attachment with this research protocol of information on the study, an assent form (completed by the student) and a consent form (completed by their parent/guardian). Informed consent will be denoted by the submission of a consent form signed by both the participant and their legal guardian.

Study: Each student will complete a 30 minute storytelling (non-structured interview) with the researcher in May, 2012.

Remuneration: Participants will not receive any financial compensation from participating in my study. In recognition of the students’ contribution in the study, a small souvenir (University of Toronto pin or key chain) and a healthy snack or beverage will be provided by the researcher.
Confidentiality and Anonymity: Each participant will be assured of anonymity throughout the study. Everyone will be made aware that their identity will be kept confidential, in addition to their name being excluded from every document resulting from this study (e.g., Master’s thesis, published articles, presentations). All tape-recorded and transcribed interview data will be stored in a password protected computer file while printed data and consent/assent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet. All data will be stored until the project has been evaluated, at which time it will be destroyed. Computer files will be deleted and paper files will be shredded.

Withdrawal: Every participant will be continually made aware of the fact that they are free to withdraw from the study at any time without incurring any negative consequences.

Feedback: At the end of the study, a summary of the data will be made available for each participant upon request. Furthermore, a copy of my thesis will be provided to those interested based on request.
奥林匹克主义在教育中的实施—北京奥运会奥林匹克学校教育的评估研究

研究目的：调查和评估北京奥运会前、中的奥林匹克教育（奥教）活动，研究奥教活动的受益者—北京市中小学生的受教育经历和感受。

研究对象：毕业于北京市羊坊店中心小学（年龄：14—17岁，年级：初二—高一）的学生，在2007—2008年间在羊坊店中心小学就读过程中接受奥教与文化活动。研究对象需参加或接受过奥教活动，并能够理解和签署未成年人同意书。研究对象的参与是完全自愿的。

研究对象招募：研究者（我本人）得到多伦多大学研究伦理办公室的审批之后，将通过羊坊店中心小学的体育老师，周晨光老师，的帮助，联系并招募研究对象。周老师将代表我给所有的潜在研究对象发送一封电子邮件，任何有兴趣参与这项研究的学生都可以联系我，我还将给研究对象提供进一步的信息，包括这项研究的具体目的，实施方法和研究对象的参与情况。

知情同意：我将给任何有兴趣参与的学生发送以下信息：研究计划实施方案、未成年人同意书（将由研究对象本人签署）、家长/监护人同意书（将由研究对象的家长或监护人签署）。知情同意的完成需由学生签名同意和家长/监护人签名同意两部分构成。

研究过程：每个参与学生将在2012年5月与研究者（我本人）进行历时30分钟左右的采访对话。

酬谢：研究对象参与本研究的不会得到任何金钱报酬，然而，作为对研究对象的参与和潜在贡献的感谢，研究者（我本人）将会为每位研究参与者提供小礼物（如多伦多大学徽章或钥匙链），并会为研究对象提供健康的零食或饮料。

保密和匿名：在整个研究过程中，每位参与者都将给予化名或被匿名，以保护他们的隐私。研究对象的名字将不会出现在任何与本研究相关的资料中（包括研究者的硕士毕业论文，学术期刊以及学术会议报告）。所有采访资料和录音记录都将被保存在一台密码保护的计算机上；所有同意书和纸质资料都将被保存在研究者办公室的保险柜中。所有的资料在该研究结束时会被集体销毁。

退出研究：每位研究参与者都有权利随时退出该研究，不用给予任何解释，也不会承担任何消极后果。

研究反馈：若研究对象要求，研究者（我本人）将提供采访资料的总结和硕士论文完成稿的复印件。
Appendix-G Ethics Letter of Approval

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

PROTOCOL REFERENCE # 27473

May 9, 2012

Dr. Bruce Kidd
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Miss Chang Liu
FACULTY OF PHYSICAL EDUCATION AND HEALTH

Dear Dr. Kidd and Miss Chang Liu,

Re: Your research protocol entitled, "From rhetoric to action - Employing Olympism as an educational tool: An examination and evaluation of the school-based Olympic education programs in the Beijing Olympic Games"

We are writing to advise you that the Health Sciences Research Ethics Board (REB) has granted approval to the above-named research protocol under the REB's delegated review process. Your protocol has been approved for a period of one year and ongoing research under this protocol must be renewed prior to the expiry date.

Any changes to the approved protocol or consent materials must be reviewed and approved through the amendment process prior to its implementation. Any adverse or unanticipated events in the research should be reported to the Office of Research Ethics as soon as possible.

Please ensure that you submit an Annual Renewal Form or a Study Completion Report 15 to 30 days prior to the expiry date of your current ethics approval. Note that annual renewals for studies cannot be accepted more than 30 days prior to the date of expiry.

If your research is funded by a third party, please contact the assigned Research Funding Officer in Research Services to ensure that your funds are released.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research.

Yours sincerely,

Judith Friedland, Ph.D.
REB Chair

Daniel Gyevu
REB Manager

OFFICE OF RESEARCH ETHICS
McMurrich Building, 12 Queen's Park Crescent West, 2nd Floor, Toronto, ON M5S 1S8 Canada
Tel: +1 416 946-3273 • Fax: +1 416 946-5763 • ethics.review@utoronto.ca • http://www.research.utoronto.ca/for-researchers-administrators/ethics/
To whom it may concern:

This letter is to certify that ethical review and ethical norms are not required in research involving human subjects other than drug clinical trials in China. The research conducted by Chang Liu regarding interviews with Chinese informants is considered to be culturally and ethically acceptable. Should you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me. Thank you.

Ru Xiuying

Director of the Teaching and Researching Section of Sports Sociology and Economy

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Capital University of Sports and Physical Education
Beijing, China.