

The Youth Olympic Games Educational Program

★ thesportjournal.org/article/the-youth-olympic-games-educational-program

August 23, 2024

Through Experiential Learning Theory Lens

Authors: Jannicke Staalstroem OLY^{1,2}, Marina Iskhakova³, Alex C. Gang⁴, and Zack P. Pedersen⁵

¹School of Sport Sciences, Faculty of Health Sciences, UiT The Arctic University of Norway, Tromsø, Norway

²Faculty of Education and Social Work, The University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

³Research School of Economics, Australia National University, Canberra, Australia

⁴College of Education, Washington State University

⁵Department of Kinesiology & Sport Management, Texas Tech University

Abstract

Purpose: The Youth Olympic Games (YOG), the largest international sport event for young athletes, allows athletes to take part in an Olympic educational program. These programs have never been examined through the lens of Experiential Learning Theory (ELT). The purpose of this study is to provide in-depth analysis and evaluation of all YOG educational programs design by date (2010 – 2020) through the lens of ELT and to uncover the areas of where the strengthening of the programs impact is feasible and encouraged.

Methods: A thorough YOG documents analysis was performed on the six YOG's educational programs by examining the place and role of each of the four elements of ELT and how prevalent they were.

Results: Results of our analysis show that YOG educational programs are not properly balanced and that *concrete experiences* turned to be the mostly and overly covered in the six games by the price of other critically important ELT stages. *Reflective observations* and *abstract conceptualizations* come into play sporadically and also only in later games, although still underwhelmingly. *Active experimentations* are covered through media activities in most of the games and the whole potential of the stage is due to be fully utilised.

Conclusions: YOG educational program impact on YOG athletes could be significantly enhanced by embracing and sufficiently incorporating all 4 ELT stages into the program design and delivery.

Applications in Sport: This study highlights the potential of ELT as a theoretical tool for addressing the impact learning and change the educational program can have on the YOG participants. The performed document analysis suggests on how learning can be enhanced for the YOG athletes. Suggestions for the future YOG educational program designers are formulated and provided.

Keywords: Educational Program, Youth Programs, Olympic Education, Experiential learning, Young Athletes

Examining The Youth Olympic Games Educational Program Through Experiential Learning Theory

The educational purpose of the Youth Olympic Games (YOG) is delivered to the athletes through the YOG educational program (IOC, 2016, 2019), founded on the concept of Olympism (Naul & Binder, 2017). The YOG was established to be more than a sporting event, whereby through the Olympism perspective and Olympic values (i.e., excellence, friendship, respect) young athletes could be instructed on topics like healthy lifestyles, doping issues, global challenges, and their potential role as sport ambassadors (IOC, 2011). Additionally, the YOG was intended to reignite Olympic ideals, which were perceived to be lacking in the contemporary Olympic Games (Naul, 2010, p. 23). The IOC hoped that the YOG athletes would carry positive values throughout their sporting event, and in their working and private lives (IOC, 2011).

Therefore, the Olympic movement saw the YOG as a way of instilling health, sport, and social values, in addition to Olympism (Parry, 2012). To accomplish this, the educational program was crucial for the IOC and the YOG, given that the young athletes are at such an important developmental stage in life. YOG educational programs have been modified to meet the four learning pillars stipulated by the IOC and the YOG Organizing Committee (i.e., learning to know, to do, to be, and to live together; YOGOC). Each YOGOC exercised its autonomy to establish various educational formats, which reveal limited consistency from one YOG to the next. Although the educational programs of the YOG carry significant importance in instilling positive values in the lives of young athletes, its effectiveness is hindered by inconsistencies within the learning formats and the network of partner organizations. This reveals an absence of a reliable mechanisms capable of adequately scrutinizing the foundations of the programs as well as their learning potentials. Reflecting on the need to better understand the educational programs, we suggest that Kolb's Experimental learning theory (Kolb, 1984) is a valuable theoretical tool to assess and strengthen learning for the athletes who are in a critical developmental stage. According to Newman et al. (2018), historically this method of ELT programming and its related practises have found to be effective when working with youth (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Gosen & Washbush, 2004; Kolb & Kolb 2008). Therefore, the IOC and the YOGOC educational program developers have the opportunity to implement experiential learning methods to increase youth athlete's knowledge (Kolb & Kolb 2009a). Additionally, these programs have the chance to develop the young athletes' skills on and off their field of play by highlighting their values and developing their capacities, such as contributing not only to themselves but to their communities as well (Kolb, 1984; 2015; Kolb & Kolb, 2005; 2008).

Literature Review

Experiential Learning Theory

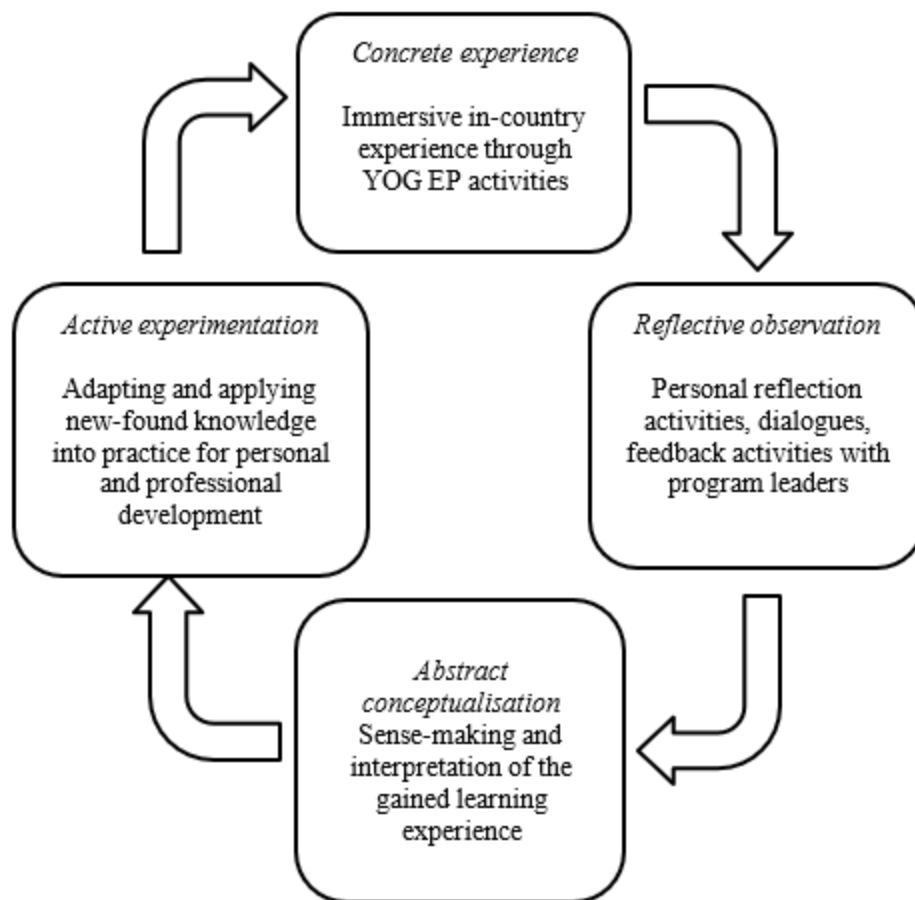
Experiential learning theory (ELT) highlights the critical role that experience has on impacting learning and change (Kolb, 1984; 2015). ELT defines learning as a continuous process of adapting to an environment by acquiring new information, challenging existing knowledge, and re-learning/integrating new knowledge into action. Kolb (1984) defines it as "a dynamic process whereby knowledge is created through transformation of experiences" (p. 41). This theory postulates learning as a holistic process for the student (Kolb & Kolb, 2009b) adapting to the world, which requires the integrated functioning of the total person, such as thinking, feeling, perceiving, behaving, and interacting (Kolb, 2015). Some educational sport studies applying ELT have shown success with this model (Bethell & Morgan, 2012; Sato & Laughlin, 2018). Additionally, more studies within the broader spectrum of sports, encompassing areas such as sports education, management, psychology, and sociology, have utilized Experiential Learning

Theory (ELT) to gain a deeper understanding of the influence of sporting activities on individuals, groups, and organizations (Newman et al., 2017). Although most of the existing research has focused on evaluating the educational potentials inherent in diverse sport activities, scholarly inquiry has swiftly expanded to encompass sport-related learning platforms (e.g., sport internships, sport-for-development programs) that leverage sport as a mechanism for effective learning (e.g., Brown et al., 2018; Sattler, 2018). It is noteworthy that ELT has not been applied in the context of the YOG or the Olympic athlete (Cisek, 2023).

Ultimately the holistic nature of ELT will fit well with the complexity and holistic nature of learning in the YOG educational program formats. Indeed, the way in which athletes conduct their learning through the YOG educational programs (i.e., activities), shapes the course of their professional and personal development. The YOG educational programs offer an ideal immersion environment that facilitates intense experiential learning by impacting athletes and their multifaceted professional and personal development (see the full details in Appendix 1).

We suggest that the YOG's educational programs are designed and capable of bringing participants through the four stages of the experiential learning cycle identified by Kolb and Kolb (2005), as shown in the ELT framework in Figure 1. The '*concrete experiences*' are the cornerstone of each of the YOG educational program offerings, and are where the students (i.e., athletes) can participate in new learning (Sato & Laughlin, 2018). Furthermore, the '*reflective observation*' stage is facilitated by reflection and feedback sessions to review the experiences (Kolb & Kolb, 2015). The '*abstract conceptualization*' is enforced by analytical reflection during the duration of the program through the post-event stage. '*Active experimentation*' occurs during the post-event stage and is where the individuals' (i.e., athletes) experiences are formed through the realization of increased cultural abilities according, to Kolb et al. (2015).

Figure 1. Application of Experiential Learning Theory framework to YOG educational program (YOG EP). Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development.



This completes the ELT cycle when new knowledge is applied to real-life tasks for the participants (Chan, 2012; Roark & Norling, 2010; Sato & Laughlin, 2018). Kolb (1984; 2015) claims that learning occurs through the combination of grasping (i.e., taking in information) and transforming (i.e., interpreting and acting on the information) experiences. Foundational experiences provide opportunities for observation and reflection for the YOG athlete. Reflection leads to new ideas or modification of old ideas. Changing ideas lead to new implications and form the basis for experimentation. The process of actively testing ideas through experimentation creates new experiences and the cycle continues for the athlete. The continual process of experience, reflection, thought, and action creates new knowledge and new behaviour (Sato & Laughlin, 2018). This means that athletes' learning abilities must be involved in a continuous and cyclical learning process which focuses on experience and reflection in a holistic perspective (Kolb & Kolb, 2005). Additionally, according to Kolb et al. (2001), the learner can enter any of the four stages in the learning cycle, although for effective learning all four abilities of the ELT must be present. Arguably for a young athlete who takes part in one YOG in their life over a time of 10-14 days, it may be challenging to "act and reflection at the same time in a new environment and take some experience" (Lehan, 2020, p. 243). Although with the right implementation (and some previous learning experience in the athlete's own life) the transition of the programs activity and learning has the potential to be meaningful (Lehan, 2020).

Therefore, through a document analysis we demonstrate which facets of ELT are most utilized, thereby allowing suggestions on how the educational programs of the YOG may benefit in the future with the implementation of a holistic ELT approach.

YOG Educational Themes and Principles

The educational programs that the YOG constructs for the athletes at each of the Games are based on Olympism and Olympic education (Naul & Binder, 2017; Staalstroem, 2021), and are optional for any of the athletes. These Olympic learning activities are grounded in five key educational themes (i.e., Olympism, skill development, well-being and healthy lifestyle, social responsibility, and expression) and are carefully selected by each host nation's YOGOC in cooperation with the IOC (IOC, 2015). The skill development theme encourages athletes to develop new skills throughout life and in doing so also forge positive friendships based on mutual respect. The well-being and healthy lifestyle theme not only focus on athlete-centric health issues but also goes beyond the athletes' immediate needs as they are encouraged to develop healthy living habits which will always remain with them. The social responsibility theme introduces the athletes to the idea of being role models in society for not only sport but also for environmental and/or humanitarian issues by drawing on the positive experiences they have gained from participating in the YOG education program. The expression theme encourages the athletes to fully appreciate that their pursuit of excellence in sport and life is a valuable contribution to society. Therefore, it is important for the athletes to be able to share their experiences in a responsible manner across all mediums (IOC, 2015, pp. 60–62; Staalstroem, 2021, p. 8).

Based on UNESCO's educational strategy and recommendations (IOC, 2008, p. 106), the IOC developed the YOG educational program learning strategy to address the five key themes with four fundamental learning pillars, conceptualized as the "4 pillars of Education." These four pillars are classified as learning to know (e.g., educational sessions), learning to do (e.g., educational activities), learning to be (e.g., educational forums), and learning to live together (e.g., synergetic events consisting of celebrating cultures and traditions). Here we can see that the IOC and YOGOC program developers can set the athletes up for the opportunity to challenge their learning with activities that combine different learning modes representing Kolb's learning cycle. Through these four pillars there are opportunities to accommodate the different learning preferences for each individual (Kolb & Kolb, 2022).

Each YOGOC had to ensure the five themes were introduced through fun-filled activities to provide learning and development opportunities blended with sports and culture (IOC, 2012). The educational programs have continually developed into a more focused educational learning program for the elite athletes (IOC, 2019). Furthermore, the educational activities in the program are divided into two parts (IOC, 2015). First, the IOC includes a number of activities for the athletes which involve international partners such as the World Anti-Doping Agency, for example. Topics covered by these activities include Olympism, Olympic history, fair play, anti-doping, anti-betting, injury prevention, ethics in sport, abuse in sport, sexual harassment, healthy body image, athlete career management, the environment, humanitarian issues, peace, children's rights, and social media. The second group of activities are proposed by the YOGOC with content based on the expertise of the local national organising committee and their partners.

Reflecting on the gap in current literature as described above, this study utilizes ELT to conduct a systematic analysis of all YOGs educational programs offered since their introduction in 2010. The following research question was established to guide the researchers through the research process:

RQ: How can the educational programs in the six YOG (and the way they evolved over time) be assessed and advanced through the experiential learning theory?

Methodology

Materials and Design

Before starting this section, a personal statement: It is important to acknowledge when this article was in its infancy one of the researchers is a three-time Olympian and had been involved in several YOGs in

various roles over a decade (coaching and attaché). This researcher's positionality influences this research including the choice of topic. Therefore, detachment and objectivity were a requirement for producing reliable knowledge during data collection (Bowen, 2009). Additionally, the rationale for choosing one method was to suggest ELT in a practical setting for future research to add more value to the program.

To examine the research question stated above, a document analysis was conducted, which included all documents published by the IOC (see Appendix) that provided critical information (e.g., formats, designs, activities) on the educational programs implemented at the six previous YOGs. Viewed as a qualitative research method, document analysis entails a systematic process to review and assess both printed and online documents (Bowen, 2009). Documents are comprised of words and images that are created and shared independently from researchers' involvement and interest in the YOG and its Olympic educational program. Scholars, such as Atkinson and Coffey (1997) consider documents as social facts to indicate that their usage and dissemination are compounded upon socially organized contexts. Through utilizing document analysis as the methodological lens, researchers aim to examine documents to elicit meaning and establish empirical knowledge (e.g., Corbin & Stratus, 2008) about the YOG educational programs activities over the six games in the history. While document analysis is often used in conjunction with other qualitative methods (e.g., interviews, participant observation) for the purpose of triangulation, it can be employed as the sole method, if its limitations are properly addressed. A common critique on employing a document analysis as the only method is related to its tendency to incur biased data selection and limitations on retrievability (Yin, 1994). However, these constraints were mitigated through applying a rigorous data collection strategy, wherein official documents and articles related to all YOG educational programs were collected in their entirety. Moreover, employing a document analysis is a suitable method to this research context, as it offers a sound way of tracking changes and developments of the phenomenon under scrutiny, which aligns with researchers' intention to observe how the YOG educational programs have evolved over time.

Procedure

We used various databases to start with (e.g., PubMed, Google search, Google Scholar, EBSCOhost) searching for Youth Olympic Game AND education /educational/ program / programme and focused it in on the Olympic World Library. To secure a comprehensive pool of documents to review and analyse, researchers identified official documents in the first round of the YOGs' educational programs published by the previous YOGOCs and the IOC. The screening process excluded non-English documents, all peer review articles (as none has used ELT in any YOG studies), Paralympic Games and duplicates. Such an approach allowed the researchers to include a diverse focused range of documents (e.g., YOGOCs' official report, IOC documents on candidature procedure, event manuals, press release on educational programs, post-event reports, program description, YOGOCs' pre-event promotion materials).

Through data extraction and analysis, we followed a thorough review of documents, data were organized into distinct formats from each YOG according to the activities held, and by reflecting on the research question. The use of thematic analysis enabled identification of emerging themes within each YOG context. This process entailed two authors individually coding the refined data and subsequently engaging in discussions to actively share their interpretations until a consensus was reached, which, in turn, ensured intercoder reliability (Creswell, 2012). Each author carefully examined the data and conducted coding and category construction (six YOG in total) to uncover formats used. They represented various contents from each of the six YOGs' educational activities, which were then scrutinized through the four elements of ELT.

Results and Discussion

The YOG educational programs have constantly evolved since their inception in Singapore 2010, as they have become more complex and ambitious regarding what they hope to accomplish. Based on the analysis, a shift away from philosophical centered objectives to more practical elite athlete focused, and individual personal development objectives has occurred over the course of 10 years. Within the following sections, the results of the document analysis and the specific educational formats offered by the YOG are introduced and then compared based on their fulfilment of ELT criteria.

YOG Singapore 2010 Educational program

Singapore held the inaugural YOG in 2010 focusing on the Olympic movement, athletes' development, and their roles and responsibility in sports practice and society (IOC, 2011, p. 5). During the 13 days, 3,524 athletes from 205 nations were exposed to the five key themes implemented through 50 different activities in seven educational formats described hereafter (IOC, 2012, p. 7; SYOGOC, 2010). The activity, 'Chat with Champions' consisted of athlete role models sharing their experiences and mentoring athletes during competition and at other activities. The forums offered different topics for athletes to share the athlete role models' experiences of excellence, friendship and respect, in addition to answering the young athletes' questions in a talk show format. 'Discovery Activities' were interactive exhibitions and workshop activities that were held for athlete to learn about important topics to use in personal development. 'World Culture Village' was a booth area hosted by local Singaporeans where athletes were able to interact with cultures of the countries represented in the YOG, and included dancing, singing, body painting and traditional games. 'Community Project' was where athletes could participate in activities together with local organizations to learn the importance of social responsibility and to be inspired to take part in their own local community at home. 'Arts and Culture' was a group of activities aimed at celebrating Olympic themes such as youth, culture, and friendship through the mediums of dance, art, and music. 'Island Adventure' was utilized for athletes to learn the values of mutual respect, friendship, and teamwork in sport through confidence building courses with water activities and other challenging physical activities. Finally, 'Exploration Journey' was a "green day" experience with a terrarium workshop and garden tour, as the athletes learned about the ecosystem.

YOG Innsbruck 2012 Educational program

Innsbruck 2012 in Austria, the inaugural games for winter sports, aimed to deliver lasting benefits and develop enthusiasm for sport among young people, building on the Olympic Spirit and using the Olympic values of excellence, respect, and friendship for the 1,022 athletes representing 69 nations (IOC, 2016, p. 4). Athletes were introduced to the education program by young ambassadors and athlete role models. The Innsbruck program delivered 27 activities based around six formats, described hereafter (IOC, 2012, p. 9; IYOGOC, 2012). An innovation at Innsbruck 2012 was the introduction of the Yogger, a USB device with information about the program and activities. The Yogger was created to build awareness of the education program and thereby increase attendance (IYOGOC, 2012). An activity called 'Media Lab' was available for athletes to become educated on how to create media content (including four workshops), how to express themselves, and how to safely use social media. 'World Mile Project' educated athletes on tradition in art, sport, music, culture, lifestyles, clothing, language, and famous personalities. Interactive workshops and exhibitions by the IOC's partners on global topics were utilized. 'Sustainability Project' taught athletes about environmental issues and sustainable developments, such as being waste wise, saving water and electricity, mountain awareness, and minimizing nature risks. 'Art Project' allowed athletes to share experiences and express themselves through modern art, music and dance. A 'Competence Project' was used to facilitate interaction between athlete role models allowing them to educate the athletes on aspects that professional athletes need to balance and be aware of. Finally, a 'Youth Olympic Festival' educated athlete through teambuilding activities in hopes for new friendships and networking.

YOG Nanjing 2014 Educational program

The slogan for Nanjing 2014 in China was “Share the Games, Share our Dreams” for all the 3,759 athletes from 202 countries (NYOGOC, 2014). The vision of Nanjing YOG was “to praise young people, advocate for a balanced development of blending education and sport, and to raise awareness about Olympic spirit and the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect,” (IOC, 2016, p. 2) which all linked back to the core of the YOG. The 50 educational activities in five different formats are described below, “embodying the Olympic values” (NYOGOC, 2014, 2015, p. 17). The program was introduced to the athletes in a “Let’s Get Together” gathering to inspire them to be active and magnify their learning opportunities (NYOGOC, 2014). At Nanjing 2014, the Yogger innovation from Innsbruck 2012 was upgraded to online access. Nanjing 2014 also introduced the Learn and Share environment to describe the areas where the educational activities took place (NYOGOC, 2015). The ‘Youth Festival’ activity was used to educate athlete through experiencing different traditions and cultures with sport activities from the Chinese culture in dance, music, opera, and martial arts. ‘Boost Your Skills’ combined forums, discussion, mentoring and sharing to allow athletes to learn more about social issues through being exposed to global issues, workshops on fair play and peace promotion among others. This activity emphasized the importance of a supportive network to help athletes maintain a dual career, with a stronger understanding of time management to help them throughout their daily life as young athletes. ‘World Culture Village’ again hosted booths about cultural diversity around the world. ‘Discover Nanjing’ allowed athletes to visit interesting historical and cultural attractions, as athletes visited the famous Ancient City Wall. More trips were used to educate athletes on not just the Chinese culture but the importance of taking care of the environment as well. Finally, ‘Digital and Social Media’ was an activity for media training by experts, and the introduction of new technologies.

YOG Lillehammer 2016 Educational program

Lillehammer in Norway hosted the second YOG for winter sports in February 2016, with 1,060 athletes from 71 countries and the slogan of “Go beyond and create tomorrow”. The Lillehammer YOGOC wanted the educational activities to be the foundation of the YOG to offer the sports community the option “to share experiences for the local young people, athletes and other participants, equip them with the key skills to become sports champions on the field of play, and life champions off the field of play” (IOC, 2016, p. 6). The 33 interactive activities once again centred on the five key themes and were delivered by five formats summarised below (LYOGOC, 2016). The ‘Your Career’ activity allowed athletes to see what they would need to know after their sporting career had come to an end by teaching them about time management and networking. ‘Your Body and Mind’ educated athlete on injury prevent, clean sport without doping, safe sport, in addition to the emphasis on understanding the importance of motor skills, mental training, and good nutrition. ‘Your Stories’ gave insights into athletes on how to tell their own story (via media training). Finally, ‘Your Discovery’ educated athletes on Norwegian winter sport culture through the Olympic history.

YOG Buenos Aires 2018 Educational program

Buenos Aires hosted in 2018 with the motto feel the future. Doing so by implementing the vision to bring sport closer to the people in sport, cultural and educational celebration by celebrating younger and more urban games (BAYOGOC, 2018). It was also an event with a focus on gender equality with participation of 3997 YOG athletes with equal gender split from 206 nations. During these Games the educational program and formats had been developed further by representatives from the IOC and Olympic stakeholders by having less locations and comprised of activities that are focused on the athletes’ sports career and individual development” (IOC, 2018a, p. 97). The Athlete365 digital platform was also being actively seen for the first time at the games with hands on activities incorporated in Learn and Share education program

area, Athlete365 Space, a program geared towards conveying the importance of clean (non-doping) athletes, good sportsmanship, and fair play in sport. ‘Performance Accelerator’ educated athlete on how to be responsible by learning more about injury prevention and strength training techniques. ‘Gamechangers Hub’ was a media training activity on how to maximize digital and social media in professional and personal lives. This activity allowed athletes to understand the best way to express their point of view and how to create awareness about themselves. ‘IF Focus Day’ was an activity with selected objectives linked to the young athlete’s development of new abilities and skills for personal and career development using the Olympic values of excellence, friendship and respect. ‘Chat with Champions’ was again introduced by having young athletes interact with Olympians on personal, sport, and professional endeavours.

YOG Lausanne 2020 Educational program

The city of Lausanne held the 2020 YOG with the slogan “Start Now.” This was now the third winter YOG in the history, with 1788 athletes from 79 nations competing in the city of the IOC headquarters in Switzerland. For the first time we see that the education program is called “Athlete365 Education Programme” with activities that link to the IOC’s Athlete365 universal digital platform developed by athletes for athletes in cooperation with the IOC (IOC, 2020a, p. 181). It incorporated Olympians, five educational formats, and around 20 educational activities (LAYOGOC, 2020; IOC, 2020b, pp. 3-6).

The activity named ‘Awareness’ educated athletes on how to be responsible young ambassadors of their sport by playing without doping, fighting against corruption, and learning to prevent abuse. Additional components of this activity allowed athletes to be taught how to balance sport and education, time management, and networking. The ‘Health for Performance’ activity educated young athletes to be aware of how to develop their performance, learn about injury prevention, and who to talk to in tough situations. ‘Game Changer HUB’ educated athletes on how to produce and show their own video content and prepared them to participate in a live TV show on the Olympic Channel. ‘Chat with Champions’ and ‘IF Focus Day’ were again introduced, highlighting the perceived benefit and success of running these types of educational program activities.

Using the Educational Learning Theory (ELT) as its foundational framework, this research rigorously investigates the extent to which the International Olympic Committee (IOC) is effectively accomplishing its objectives, delineated through the five fundamental themes that underpin the educational programs during their implementation. With new and former Olympians, it is important to continue to inspire development and monitor the YOG athletes’ educational needs as it is a valuable place for learning and sharing knowledge. The next section discusses the key application of the theoretical ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2015, 2022) concept to the YOG educational program.

YOG Educational Programs Comparison and Evolvement

The investigation revealed an imbalance in experiential educational activities within the YOG and that were offered to the 15,157 athletes, as this part of the ELT process was absent from most of the Games. It was also discovered that experiential educational YOG activities were not fully balanced as a majority of the formats and activities were the activities that utilized concrete experiences. Reflection observations became more prevalent with each iteration of the YOG, as was the same for abstract conceptualizations. The only active experimentation came from the ‘Game Changer HUB’ (former media and social activities), which obviously saw enough success and was easy enough to facilitate that it was worth incorporating in two separate Games. Although the athlete can enter Kolb’s learning cycle at any time, this activity shows opportunities to align new knowledge out in real life (Kolb, 2015). While the concrete experiences are clearly covered, as the other components of ELT are examined, demonstrated by the presence of certain dimensions are missed, indicating a gap between what has been seen as successful and

beneficial constructions of ELT and what is currently utilized. The mapping of 6 YOGs educational programs formats across corresponding ELT components is presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Mapping of learning formats for YOG EP 2010-2020 through the lens of ELT.

| YOG | Format | Corresponding ELT Components | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|----|----|----|
| | | CE | RO | AC | AE |
| Singapore 2010 | Chat with Champions | * | * | | |
| | Discovery Activities | * | * | * | |
| | World Culture Village | * | | | |
| | Community Project | * | * | * | |
| | Arts and Culture | * | | | |
| | Island Adventure | * | | | |
| | Exploration Island | * | * | | |
| Innsbruck 2012 | Media Lab | * | * | * | * |
| | World Mile Project | * | | | |
| | Sustainability Project | * | * | * | |
| | Arts Project | * | * | | |
| | Competence Project | * | | | |
| | Youth Olympic Festival | * | | | |
| Nanjing 2014 | Youth Festival | * | | | |
| | Boost Your Skills | * | * | * | |
| | World Culture Village | * | | | |
| | Discover Nanjing | * | * | | |
| | Digital and Social Media | * | * | * | * |
| Lillehammer 2016 | Your Actions | * | * | * | |
| | Your Career | * | * | * | |
| | Your Body and Mind | * | * | | |
| | Your Stories | * | * | * | * |
| | Your Discovery | * | | | |
| Buenos Aires 2018 | Athlete365 | * | * | * | |
| | Performance Accelerator | * | * | * | |
| | Gamechanger Hub | * | * | * | * |
| | IF Focus Days | * | | | |
| | Chat with Champions | * | * | | |
| Lausanne 2020 | Awareness | * | * | * | |
| | Health for Performance | * | * | * | |
| | Gamechanger Hub | * | * | * | * |
| | Chat with Champions | * | * | | |
| | IF Focus Day | * | | | |

Note: CE = Concrete Experience, RO = Reflective Observation, AC = Abstract Conceptualization, AE = Active Experimentation.

Active conceptualisation sessions (like sessions or activities capable of stimulating analytical reflection or challenging the current stereotypes and mind views) unfortunately are fragmented and cannot be described as equally represent in the curricula. With respect to the active experimentation stage, initiatives like Athlete365 activities in later games created actual opportunities for athletes to continue the developmental journey on the Athlete365 digital platform after the YOG. Meaning, the IOC have an opportunity to continue to influence the experiential learning to increase athlete's knowledge (Kolb & Kolb 2009a). The only suitable example which we identified was the Gamechangers Hub format during 2018 and 2020, where the opportunity for reflection, awareness of unique selves, and experimenting with new conceptualizations was minimal. Still, though, active experimentation was undervalued and not utilized properly. We could conclude from the mapping in Table 1 above that predominant attention is given to unique memorable and diverse experiences, and to some extent physical tests for health and injury training prevention, with a slowly increasing number of reflection and conceptualisation opportunities.

Theoretical and Practical Applications

ELT has been employed in many academic disciplines, such as studying abroad (Iskhakova et al., 2020), music education (Russell-Bowie, 2013), physical education (Bethell & Morgan, 2012), sport psychology (Sato & Laughlin, 2018), engineering (Chan, 2012) and hospitality (Fallon & Daruwalla, 2004), including outdoor education (Roark & Norling, 2010) and global leader development (Fey, 2020).

Furthermore, previous results have demonstrated that when university courses utilize the ELT framework, students develop a deeper knowledge of the subject matter (Bethell & Morgan, 2012), increase their sense of competence in target skills (Roark & Norling, 2010; Iskhakova et al., 2020), gain a better understanding of the link between theory and practice, and achieve greater personal development (Sato & Laughlin, 2018; Chan, 2012; Fallon & Daruwalla, 2004; Russell Bowie, 2013; Fey, 2020). Despite the high potential that ELT has, as previously discussed, it has scarcely been utilized in in the context of Olympic athletes (Cisek, 2023).

The current investigation examined ELT and discovered a lacking adherence to each of the dimensions in this theory by the YOG educational programs, as is critical for learning to occur (Kolb, 2015). This novel finding aids literature pertaining to ELT as the document analysis clearly indicates the dimensions of the theory that are more heavily, or easily, incorporated in YOG educational programs. The goal of this investigation was to examine the application of ELT in a practical setting, in the YOG context, thereby allowing future researchers to evaluate which facets of the theory (Kolb, 1984, 2015) are underutilised and can be enhanced in the YOGs context. Utilizing a document analysis, Table 1 was constructed to illustrate and map the learning formats of past YOG educational programs through the lens of ELT. Examining each of the four stages of ELT (Kolb, 1984, 2015) in the context of the YOG educational programs indicates an underutilization of certain key stages across all YOGs programs. With the benefits that are derived from a full utilisation of ELT, it is posited that further incorporation of activities within certain stages would make the YOG educational programs more impactful in both the short and long term. In ELT studies development and change is essential, as the programs should be flexible and creative as they explore ways of facilitating athletes' learning effectiveness (Kolb, 2001; Kolb, 2015; Sato & Laughlin, 2018). Demonstrably, at the inception of the YOG in 2010 very few reflection opportunities existed in the educational program, juxtaposed to the current prevalence of this activity.

As Sato and Laughlin (2018) state, a successful integration of ELT allows athletes to take control and responsibility of their learning, instead of passively receiving experience and knowledge. Kolb (2015, p. 299) call this to take active ownership and responsibility of their learning cycle. Therefore, more 'reflective opportunities' at each timepoint should be created. With a greater emphasis on experiential activities, accommodations such as time for in-depth reflections should be implemented. More '*abstract conceptualizations*' and '*active experimentations*' should be incorporated and facilitated. An increase in these stages means athletes will be given more opportunities to assimilate their lived experiences and

reflections into abstract concepts, thereby challenging and evaluating their own world views and values and advancing own development for a long-term horizon (Kolb & Kolb, 2009a; Kolb, 2015).

If the IOC (2019) wants the YOG to be a steppingstone for these athletes before the Olympic Games and a developmental platform that focuses on the holistic athletic development, the IOC should implement Kolb's theory to a greater extent.

Limitations and Future Studies

As majority of studies, our study is not free of limitations. The first limitation relates to the methodology. While novel findings pertaining to the usage of certain stages of ELT were discovered, the benefit of these activities were not measured. As the analysed documents were produced by the YOGOC and the IOC, understanding from the educators, administrators, and athletes viewpoint are not observed. While the methodology was purposefully selected to accomplish the desired analysis (Bowen, 2009), this limitation is present. Furthermore, there may have also been selected educational learning activities that were adjusted when they were presented. We suggest future scholars to examine the unique impact of the YOG educational programs through various other lens, such as other learning theories, social theories (Parent et al., 2019), personal development theories, and cultural theories.

Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interests to declare.

Appendix 1

A description of the 14 core documents that were included in the data analysis.

| Title | Author (year) | Document type | Description |
|--|----------------------|----------------------|---|
| Singapore 2010 YOG. Blazing the Trail. | SYOGOC (2010) | Report | This official document describes the beginning of the YOG -2010 games. Presentation of the games with sport, education and culture, to go beyond the games. |
| IOC. Factsheet: YOG. | IOC (2012) | Document | Discusses birth of the YOG, its vision, programs, and five educational key themes. |
| Innsbruck 2012 YOG. Be part of it. | IYOGOC (2012) | Report | Report on the implementation, management and delivery of the first Winter YOG |
| Chef de Mission Manual. Nanjing 2014 Summer YOG. | NYOGOC (2014) | Manual | Describes policies and procedures for the YOG-2014, with information on learning program and five educational key themes. |

| | | | |
|---|----------------|----------|--|
| YOG Event Manual. 7th Edition. May 2015. | IOC (2015) | Manual | Contains the main requirements for planning, organisation and staging of the YOG, including its learning program. |
| Share the games share our dreams. Official Report of the 2nd Summer YOG Nanjing 2014. | NYOGOC (2015) | Report | This is the official report from Nanjing YOG 2014 presents the events timeline with sport, culture, and education. |
| The YOG learn and share beyond the field of play. Factsheet YOG | IOC (2016) | Document | This updated factsheet version brings up the vision and mission with culture and education in the YOG. With the learn and share activities concept it states the five key educational themes through formats with educational activities from the four first YOG in the history (2010-2012-2014 and 2016). |
| Lillehammer 2016 YOG. Be part of it! Go Beyond. Create tomorrow. | LYOGOC (2016) | Report | This is the official report of the Lillehammer 2016 Winter YOG. This report tells a chronological story step by step with texts and images through the games to includes sport, culture and education. |
| Buenos Aires 2018 Third summer YOG. | BAYOGOC (2018) | Report | This document is the official report of the Buenos Aires 2018 with imagery and texts that takes the reader through its history from the torch relay, to celebrate of sport and urban games with activities. |
| IOC. Chef de Mission Manual Buenos Aires 2018 YOG. | IOC (2018a) | Manual | Contains the main requirements for planning, organisation and staging of the Buenos Aires YOG for the NOC. It includes the learning program among other detailed information on game time aspects. |
| IF focus day booklet Buenos Aires 2018 YOG. | IOC (2018b) | Booklet | Contains the educational activities International Federation, in coordination with Buenos Aires 2018 YOG Organising Committee have develop for athletes to strengthen personal and career development. |
| IOC. Factsheet: The YOG compete, learn and share beyond the field of play. | IOC (2019) | Document | Provides a description of the YOG as a steppingstone in the young athletes learning pathway, in sport and beyond their sport. It explains how the IOC contributes with learning activities, and how the YOGOC has some flexibility within a now more athletes centred formats then previous YOG's. The document states some facts on all six YOG's |

educational programs. (2010-2012-2014-2016-2018 and 2020).

| | | | |
|---|----------------|----------|---|
| IOC. Lausanne 2020 Chef de Mission Manual | IOC (2020a) | Manual | Contains main requirements for planning, organisation and staging of the Lausanne YOG for the NOC. learning program among other important aspects of the games to prepare the athletes for. |
| Athlete365 Education Programme. Lausanne 2020 YOG | IOC (2020b) | Document | Presents the Athlete365 educational programme to the athletes and their entourage during the Lausanne 2020 YOG. |

References

1. Atkinson, P. A., & Coffey, A. J. (2011). Analysing documentary realities. In D. Silverman (ed.), *Qualitative Research* (pp. 56-75). Sage.
2. BAYOGOC. (2018). Buenos Aires YOG Organizing Committee. Official Report of the Buenos Aires 2018 Third Summer YOG. International Olympic Committee. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from Third Summer YOG: 6-18 October, 2018 Buenos Aires, Argentina: official report / ed. Lucía Rodríguez Saá... [et al.] – Olympic World Library (olympics.com).
3. Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative research journal*, 9(2), 27-40.
4. Brown, C., Willett, J., Goldfine, R., & Goldfine, B. (2018). Sport management internships: Recommendations for improving upon experiential learning. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 22, 75-81.
5. Chan, C. K. Y. (2012). Exploring an experiential learning project through Kolb's Learning Theory using a qualitative research method. *European Journal of Engineering Education*, 37(4), 405-415.
6. Cisek, E., Mignano, M., & Coles, J. (2023). Rally with the Rapids: An experiential learning project with Special Olympics athletes. *Findings in Sport, Hospitality, Entertainment, and Event Management*, 3(2), 1-8.
7. Conrad, D., & Hedin, D. (1982). The Impact of Experimental Education on Adolescent Development. *Child & Youth Services*, 4(3-4), 57-76.
8. Corbin, J., & Strauss, A. (2008). *Basics of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks.
9. Creswell, J. W. (2011). Controversies in mixed methods research. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4(1), 269-284.
10. Fallon, W., & Daruwalla, P. (2004). Enjoy! – Creating knowledge through experiential learning. In C. Chris (ed.), *CAUTHE 2004: Creating Tourism Knowledge* (pp. 208-218). Common Ground Publishing.
11. Fey, N. (2020). How Global Leaders Learn from International Experience: Reviewing and Advancing Global Leadership Development. In J. S. Osland, B. Szkudlarek, M. E. Mendenhall, and B. S. Reiche (eds.), *Advances in Global Leadership* (pp. 129-172). Emerald.
12. Gosen, J., & Washbush, J. (2004). A Review of Scholarship on Assessing Experiential Learning Effectiveness. *Simulation & Gaming*, 35(2), 270-293.
13. IOC. (2008). International Olympic Committee. *The YOG*. In International Olympic Academy, 9th Joint International Session for Presidents or Directors of National Olympic Academies and Officials of National Olympic Committees: Proceedings, May 12-19th, 2008, p. 106.

14. IOC. (2011). International Olympic Committee. *Factsheet. YOG*. Update May, 2011. Retrieved June 20, 2022
15. IOC. (2012). International Olympic Committee. *Factsheet: YOG*. Update July 2012. Retrieved May 10, 2023
16. IOC. (2015). International Olympic Committee. *YOG Event Manual*. 7th Edition. May 2015. [Unpublished material]. Received from the Olympic Study Centre, Lausanne: The International Olympic Committee.
17. IOC. (2016). International Olympic Committee. *Factsheet: YOG*. Updated January 2016. Retrieved May 20, 2022
18. IOC. (2018a). International Olympic Committee. *Chef de Mission Manual Buenos Aires 2018 YOG*. Retrieved May 29, 2022
19. IOC. (2019). International Olympic Committee. *Factsheet: YOG*. Updated December 2019. Retrieved May 8, 2023
20. IOC. (2020a). International Olympic Committee. *Lausanne 2020 Chef de Mission Manual*, p. 181. Retrieved May 10, 2022
21. IOC. (2020b). International Olympic Committee. *Athlete365 Education Programme: Lausanne 2020 YOG*, pp. 3-6. Retrieved May 29, 2022, from Athlete365 education programme: Lausanne 2020 YOG / Lausanne 2020 – Olympic World Library (olympics.com).
22. Iskhakova, M., Bradly, A., Whiting, B., & Lu, V. N. (2021). Cultural Intelligence Development during Short-term Study Abroad Programmes: The Role of Cultural Distance and Prior International Experience. *Studies in Higher Education*, 47(8), 1694-1711
23. IYOGOC. (2012). Innsbruck YOG Organizing Committee. *BE PART OF IT! Official report of the Innsbruck 2012 Winter YOG*. International Olympic Committee. Retrieved May 30, 2022
24. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2005). Learning Styles and Learning Spaces: Enhancing Experiential Learning in Higher Education. *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, 4(2), 193–212.
25. Kolb, A. Y., & D. A. Kolb. (2008). Experiential Learning Theory: A Dynamic, Holistic Approach to Management Learning, Education and Development. *Journal of Education and Development*, 17(9), 312–317.
26. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009a). Experiential learning theory. In S. J. Armstrong, C. V. Fukami (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Management Learning* (pp. 42-68). SAGE.
27. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2009b). The Learning Way. *Simulation & Gaming*, 40(3), 297–327.
28. Kolb, A. Y., & Kolb, D. A. (2022). Experiential Learning Theory as a Guide for Experiential Educators in Higher Education. *Experiential Learning & Teaching in Higher Education*, 1(1), 38.
29. Kolb, D. A. (2015). *Experiential learning: Experience as the source of learning and development* (2nd ed.). Pearson Education.
30. Kolb, D. A. (1984). *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development*. Prentice Hall.
31. Kolb, D. A., Boyatzis, R. E., & Mainemelis, C. (2001). Experiential Learning Theory: Previous Research and New Directions. In R. J. Sternberg & L. Zhang (eds.), *Perspectives on Thinking, Learning, and Cognitive Styles* (pp. 227–248). Routledge.
32. LAYOGOC. (2020). Lausanne YOG Organizing Committee. *Official report of the Lausanne 2020 Winter YOG*. International Olympic Committee. Retrieved April 20, 2022, from
33. Lehane, L. (2020). Experiential Learning—David A. Kolb. In B. Akpan & T. J. Kennedy (eds.), *Science Education in Theory and Practice* (pp. 241–257). Springer International Publishing.
34. Naul, R., & Binder, D. (2017). Historical Roots of the Educational Idea of Pierre de Coubertin. In R. Naul, D. Binder, A. Rychtecky, & I. Culpan (eds.), *Olympic Education: An International Review* (pp. 9-15). Taylor & Francis.
35. Naul, R. (2010). *Olympic Education* (2nd ed.). Meyer & Meyer Verlag.
36. Newman, T. J., Alvarez, M. A. G., & Kim, M. (2017). An Experiential Approach to Sport for Youth Development. *The Journal of Experiential Education*, 40(3), 308–322.
37. Newman, T. J., Kim, M., Tucker, A. R., & Alvarez, M. A. G. (2018). Learning through the adventure of youth sport. *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy*, 23(3), 280–293.

38. NYOGOC. (2014). Nanjing YOG Organizing Committee. International Olympic Committee. *Chef de Mission Manual*. Olympic World Library. The Olympic Studies Centre. Retrieved June 7, 2022
39. NYOGOC. (2015). Nanjing YOG Organizing Committee. *SHARE THE GAMES SHARE OUR DREAMS*. Official Report of the 2nd Summer YOG Nanjing 2014. Retrieved June 7, 2022
40. Parent, M. M., MacIntosh E., Culver, D., & Naraine, M. L. (2019). Benchmarking the Buenos Aires 2018 Athletes' Perspective for a Longitudinal Analysis of YOG Athlete Experience and Learning. *Lausanne, Switzerland: International Olympic Committee*.
41. Parry, J. 2012. Olympic Education and the YOG. *Acta Universitatis Carolinae: Kinanthropologica*, 48(1), 90–98.
42. Roark, M. F., & Norling, J. C. (2010). An Application of a Modified Experiential Learning Model for a Higher Education Course: Evidence of Increased Outcomes. *Journal of Outdoor Recreation, Education, and Leadership*, 2(1), 59-73.
43. Russell-Bowie, D. (2013). Mission Impossible or Possible Mission? Changing Confidence and Attitudes of Primary Preservice Music Education Students Using Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory. *Australian Journal of Music Education*, 2(1), 46-63.
44. Sattler, L. A. (2018). From classroom to courtside: An examination of the experiential learning practices of sport management faculty. *Journal of Hospitality, Leisure, Sport & Tourism Education*, 22, 52-62.
45. Sato, T., & Laughlin, D. (2018). Integrating Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory into a Sport Psychology Classroom Using a Golf-Putting Activity. *Journal of Sport Psychology in Action*, 9(1), 51-62.
46. Schellhase, K. C. (2006). Kolb's Experiential Learning Theory in Athletic Training Education: A Literature Review. *Athletic Training Education Journal*, 1(2), 18-27.
47. Staalstroem, J. (2021). The Influence of the YOG Education Program on Athletes. Doctoral dissertation, The University of Sydney. *Theses and Dissertation archives*.
48. SYOGOC. (2010). Singapore Youth Olympic Organizing Committee. *Blazing the Trail. Official report of the YOG Singapore 2010*. International Olympic Committee. Retrieved June 7, 2022, from
49. Yin, R. K. (1994). Discovering the future of the case study. Method in evaluation research. *Evaluation practice*, 15(3), 283-290.