Elite National Sports Systems: 
A comparison of Australia and 
The Netherlands

A study into Australia’s elite sports success factors to benefit the Dutch Olympic Top 10 Ambition

Author: Martijn Rondai
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University of Newcastle: Faculty of Business and Law
Student ID University of Newcastle: C3152446
Student e-mail University of Newcastle: Martijn.Rondaij@uon.edu.au
Supervisor: Dr. Jennifer Waterhouse
Co-supervisor: Assoc. Prof. Suzanne Ryan

University of Applied Sciences of Amsterdam: Sport, Management and business
Student ID University of Applied Sciences: 500529492
Student e-mail University of Applied Sciences: Martijn.Rondaij@hva.nl
Monitor: Henk Hille
Coach: Gido Vermeulen
I. Abstract

The Netherlands have the ambition to organize the 2028 Olympic Games and have set a path to ‘raise’ the entire country to an Olympic level through all levels of sport. As part of this path they formulated the goal to structurally place within the top 10 countries of the world at every Olympic Games. Australia is one of the most successful sporting nations in the world and has a global sports image. Australia and the Netherlands display similarities in population size, sports participation rates, GDP, and national culture yet Australia scores better at the Olympic Games than the Netherlands and has ranked within the top 10 countries at the last five Olympics. This raises the question why Australia achieves these successes. Initial research indicates that these successes were founded when successive Australian Governments changed the sports system in the late 1970s into a more commercialized, corporate, and professional model. It also showed that sport has played an important social and cultural role in Australia, providing a form of social cement which connects communities. Sport in Australia might be more deeply and cultural meaningful than in any other country.

The purpose of this applied scientific study is to provide an overview of the Australian sports system with a focus on finding key success factors for success on an Olympic level that may contribute to the Dutch Olympic ambition. The scope is on the elite sports level and is guided by eight focus areas that are derived from the Dutch Olympic top 10 ambition. In addition this research zooms in on the effects of culture on sport and vice versa. The research of this dissertation is a qualitative content analysis of secondary research sources such as policy documents, annual reports, academic journals, and online databases.

Results show that sport was early embedded in Australia’s culture and deeply influenced the society. Sport in Australia is used to construct both personal and national identity. Changes in the sports system in the late 1970s resulted in great successes but the world of sport is changing and so there is a shift in Australia from a primarily focus on elite sports to a more holistic approach. In the Netherlands the development of sport was shaped by existing cultural traditions and external social influences. This created a specific Dutch sports culture with its own sporting preferences and characteristic beliefs and discussions about sport. This led to a sports system that always included mass participation and grassroots sports. With the Olympic ambitions however, there is an increasing focus on elite sports as well. An increase in achievements on this elite level would require a significantly higher sports funding and centralizing resources, facilities, and support. It is evident that today’s global world of sports demands a holistic approach of the sports system.
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II. Introduction

In 2008 I started my Sport, Management and Business bachelor degree at the University Of Applied Sciences Of Amsterdam as part of the University of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. As part of an internship during my third year I developed and wrote a nationwide sports program for the Dutch police force. This program enables elite athletes to work for the Dutch police and allows them to keep competing at the highest level within their sport whilst developing competences needed for their future (corporate) careers. The Board of Commissionaires of the Dutch police gave their approval for the program to be implemented within the organizational structure of the Dutch police. Now, a nationwide sports coordinator has been assigned and the goal is to employ fifty top athletes by the end of 2012.

In order to write this program I researched the sports system of the Netherlands. It was around this time when I started to contemplate how the sports systems of other countries are designed and in what way they differ from the Dutch system. That is when I decided that this would be a good subject for a dissertation to conclude my fourth and final year. I chose to write this dissertation during overseas study at the University of Newcastle, Australia.

I chose Australia for a number of reasons. As a future sports manager I cannot ignore Australia’s international sports achievements and its global reputation as a sporting nation. Australia wins roughly twice as many medals at the Olympics than the Netherlands since the 1980 Moscow Olympics and has scored significantly higher on the Olympic medal table ever since. Australia has also been ranked within the top 10 countries on the Olympic medal table since the 1992 Olympics of Barcelona. This is an achievement the Netherlands want to accomplish as well now that they have set the goal to organize the 2028 Olympics. Furthermore, Australia achieves all of this with a significantly smaller population than its rival Olympic countries. However, the population of the Netherlands and Australia are quite similar. Even on the five cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede both countries are similar. This all together makes Australia, the host of the 1956 Melbourne and the 2000 Sydney Olympics, an interesting case for me and I decided to undertake an applied scientific study into Australia’s elite sports system.

With this research I want to acquire a clear view on how the elite sports system in Australia is built. Eventually, I hope this leads to a useful contribution for the Dutch 2028 Olympic ambition in the form of recommendations based on what I have learned in this research.
1. Research Context

The Netherlands and Australia show similarities in population and culture but have very different success rates in sport. When the Netherlands were placed within the top 10 best countries in the world on the medal table during the 2000 Sydney Olympics, an ambition arose. Sydney showed that a country with a relatively small population could successfully organize the modern Olympics. In 2006 The Dutch Olympic Committee, NOC*NSF, started researching the possibility of organizing the 2028 Olympics and Paralympics. The result of this study is the Olympic Plan 2028. This Olympic Plan acknowledges three phases. The initial research phase has been completed and ensured that all involved parties are now committed to this ambition. The second phase runs from 2009 till 2016 and has the goal to ‘raise’ the entire country to an Olympic level through all levels of sport. Finally, the third phase starts in 2016 when the Netherlands proposes candidacy to organize the 2028 Amsterdam Olympics, exactly 100 years after the first and last Olympics organized in the Netherlands (NOC*NSF, 2009). As part of the second phase NOC*NSF formulated the ambition to rank among the best 10 countries in the world during every future Olympic Games (NOC*NSF, 2012b). Australia has ranked within this top 10 on the Olympic medal table throughout the history of the modern Olympic Games. During the 1976 Games of Montreal however, Australia ranked 32nd (Olympic.org, 2012). After this all-time low, Australia changed its sports system dramatically in the late 1970s into a commercialized, corporate and professional model (Cashman, 2012). During the next Olympics in Moscow, Australia climbed back to a 15th place and has been back in the top 10 ever since the 1992 Olympics of Barcelona. Australia also scored roughly twice as many medals at the Olympics than the Netherlands since the 1980 Moscow Olympics and has scored significantly higher on the Olympic medal table ever since, with the exception of the 1984 Olympics in Los Angeles, when the Netherlands ranked 13th and Australia ranked 14th (Olympic.org, 2012).

The population of the Netherlands and Australia has been relatively similar since the 1980 Olympics. Australia’s population grew from 14.6 million in 1980 to 22.6 million in 2012 (ABS, 2012). The Dutch population grew from 14.1 million in 1980 to 16.7 million in 2012 (CBS, 2012). Yet, Australia scores more Olympic medals per capita than the Netherlands. Australia has been the best performing country for years when it comes to the number of Olympic medal per capita (InnoSportNL, 2011). In 2010, an estimated 69.4% of the population aged 15 years and over of Australia, participated monthly in physical activity for exercise, recreation, or sport (ASC, 2011). The most recent participation of the Netherlands state that 68% of the population aged between 5 and 80 years participated twelve times or more in physical activity for exercise, recreation, or sport (Mulier-Institute, 2009). When Australia and
the Netherlands are compared using the five cultural dimensions by Geert Hofstede, it can be argued that both cultures are much alike. The only significant difference is found in the masculinity dimension, where Australia scores 61 and the Netherlands scores 14 (Hofstede, 2012). These similarities in population size, sports participation rate, and culture but differences in sports success raise the question of why Australia achieved these successes, especially when Australia achieves all this with a significantly smaller population than its rival Olympic countries.

The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of the Australian elite sports system with a focus on finding key success factors for success on Olympic level that are of relevance to the Netherlands. The questions asked are relevant to the profession of a (future) sports manager in the Netherlands who wants to have a further understanding of the global world of sports. Answering these questions may also provide useful insights for the Dutch sport policy makers in their ambition to further develop the nation’s sports system and raise it to a higher Olympic level. Furthermore, this research could be relevant to students and academics who simply want to know more about the topics that are discussed in this study. In general, there are four areas in which a sports system is divided. These areas are elite sports, grassroots or amateur sports (sport for all), school sports, and commercial sports. The order of importance of each of these areas is different from country to country and is subject to numerous influences (Bottenburg, 2004). The scope of this dissertation however, is on the first group (elite sports) and identifying key elements for success at the Olympic level.

In addition, the Dutch Olympic Committee has described eight areas of focus for reaching their top 10 ambition. These areas are:

1. Elite sports infrastructure  
2. Elite sports programs  
3. Elite sports funding  
4. Professional guidance  
5. Position of the elite athlete  
6. Position of the coach and specific experts  
7. Talent development  
8. Scientific support

(NOC*NSF, 2011) These eight areas are the focus of this research. This research provides clear recommendations within the eight areas described by NOC*NSF and/or provides new insights for the Dutch Olympic ambition to structurally rank amongst the top 10 countries of the world. Eventually, it is all about making a useful contribution to reach the highest achievable outcome, which is to realize the Dutch Olympic dream of organizing the 2028 Amsterdam Olympics.
2. Literature Review

This chapter begins with highlighting relevant literature on Australia’s sports system. It provides a general overview on the literature on today’s Australian sports system and its history. It explains how its system formed in the early days when sport became more formalized and highlights the reasons for change during the late 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century. The second section of this chapter focuses on the Netherlands in a similar way. It also describes the history of the Netherlands in a nutshell in order to explore later on how that has influenced today’s sports system or might influence the country’s future sports system. Following, it will discuss the Dutch Olympic ambition and how this relates to this research into Australia’s sports system. The following section discusses several important areas of interest that come into play when a country wants to host the Olympic Games. It also describes some of the reasons why Australia came to organize the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Eventually, the aim of this chapter is to firstly justify why both countries are part of this research and secondly review the literature that lead to clear research questions that suit the purpose of this research. These research questions conclude this chapter.

2.1. History of the Sports system of Australia

Countries like Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (UK) are linked by a shared cultural and sporting history due to former colonial ties and remainders of the British Empire (Green, 2007). The sporting values and preferences of these British settlers shaped the cultural practices of sport in Australia and affected the nation’s desire for sporting success. Consequently, sport was constrained by strict behavioural parameters based on chivalry, gentlemanly conduct, and moral development. Colonial values suggested that sport created more rounded individuals and led to a better society. The pursuit of sport was widely encouraged and was seen as the cure-all for social deviance and dysfunction. However, this perception of sport was at first exclusive to the aristocratic class, while there were few opportunities for the working class to participate in any sporting activity (Stewart, Nicholson, Smith, & Westerbeek, 2004). When in 1788 the first British settlement in Australia arrived, sport was becoming a prominent factor in the lives of the British people (Cashman, 2012). The sports that arrived in colonial Australia were derived from three different cultural origins: English national sports like cricket and horse racing, traditional Scottish or Irish sports, and local versions of British sports such as wrestling and football. These sports became prominent in the lives of colonial Australians. The success of the colonies in the eyes of the pioneers could only be measured by direct comparison with the Motherland. This resulted in frequent sporting competitions between settlers and members of the parent stock. Thus,
sport provided the opportunity for the colonials to beat their ‘masters’ at their own game. During this pioneering period Australia adopted a huge pride in their sporting abilities, one that is still evident in Australian society today. When sport was introduced into the convict ranks as both a recreational pastime and a character-building exercise while their freedom was denied, sport became a form of emancipation. This fierce passion for sport is also evident in Australian society (Stewart, et al., 2004).

When Australia’s social, cultural and physical landscape was in its formative stage during the 1850s sport played a prominent role. It was the games cult from the 1870s that deeply influenced Australian society (Cashman, 2012). The games cult is also known as the English Ideology of Athleticism where games are partially used to gain physically strong and well developed bodies. A certain amount of perseverance, toughness and courage needed to be displayed on England’s playing fields. These qualities were thought to be needed to be an Australian pioneer and indispensable to the training of captains of industry and leaders of the empire (Bottenburg, 2004). The elevation of sport was also encouraged by economic and political factors. For example, the prosperity after the gold rush provided the resources to create a culture of sport with stadiums, racecourses, ovals, pools, gymnasiums and golf courses. The prosperity of the working class Australians, together with the strength of the union movement and the extension of the new land, allowed them to indulge their passion for sport. Furthermore, sport provided a convenient and common cause to unite people (Cashman, 2012).

Australia has always been successful at the Olympic Games and participated in every Olympic Summer Games since the first modern Games in 1896 in Athens, with the exception of the 1904 Olympics of St. Louis. Australia achieved several top 10 rankings on the medal table until the 1952 Olympics of Helsinki. Since these Games in Helsinki, Australia ranked within the top 10 in five successive Olympic Games until the 1976 Montreal Olympics. It was at these Olympics that Australia ranked 32nd, the country’s lowest ranking in the existence of the modern Olympics until this date (Olympic.org, 2012). As a response to this lowest achievement at the Olympic Games, in the late 1970s successive Australian Governments changed the sports system dramatically evolving it into a more commercialized, corporate and professional model. They moved from the informal promotion of sport and recreation to a more formal and direct control approach and increased funding. National sports institutions like the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) started to emerge and formed part of a national sports policy. Under the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) sport became highly regulated. In addition to overseeing the functions of the AIS, the ASC also funded several National
Sports Organizations (NSO’s) and developed elite and community recreation and participation programs. Funding and management of sport by the government was primarily directed towards high-profile sport rather than community sport from the mid-1970s. As a result 85-90 per cent of the Federal Government’s sporting budget was spent on top-level sport during the 1980s and 1990s (Cashman, 2012). After these changes, Australia climbed back into the top 10 ranking at the 1992 Olympic Games of Barcelona and has remained there ever since (Olympic.org, 2012).

In 1973, however Professor John Bloomfield recommended in his report to the Commonwealth Government on ‘The Role, Scope and Development of Recreation in Australia’ that they create community recreation centres throughout the country to encourage active and passive recreation at the grassroots level. He believed that a pyramid system participation at the grassroots level would enhance the numbers that progress to the elite level of sports (Bloomfield, 2003). The Bloomfield report was then used by the ASC to achieve their two objectives, which were (1) to reach excellence in elite sports performance by Australians, and (2) to increase participation and sports activities by Australians. It was considered that this would firstly ‘push’ the better performance from the broad participation base through to the higher levels toward the elite sports level and secondly, that successes by elite athletes would ‘draw’ potential athletes higher up the pyramid (Hogan & Norton, 2000).

At the same time, however, there has been much debate since the 1970s about the role of sport in Australian society and how the budget should best be spent. A further debate was generated by the release of a report by the Australian Government Independent Sport Panel about ‘The Future of Sport in Australia’, better known as the Crawford Report in November 2009 (Cashman, 2012). The Crawford Report is one of four reports regarding the administration of Australian sport and recommends significant changes to the Australian sports system. This report recognizes the significant gains that were achieved in the way elite sports were administered post the 1976 Olympics but also recognizes that the world has changed. The report describes that there is a need to address Australia’s goals and aspirations at both elite and participatory levels in order to:

- Continue Australia’s success at the elite level.
- Enable all Australians to participate in their sport(s) of choice.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of Australia’s population.
With the right structure and governance in place, there is a greater chance for a successful future for Australian sport. Without the right structure and governance, success will not result (Crawford, 2009).

A study into the sports policy priorities in Australia, Canada and the UK reveals four key themes that can be identified from reviewing the sports policy priorities in Australia over the past 40 years or so. The first key theme is central/federal intervention into the sports policy sector. Secondly, there is an ongoing debate on constructing sports policy around the language of rational/technocratic processes. Enduring debates regarding mass participation versus elite sports programmes is the third. The fourth and final theme is a growing realization by the government that, while ever grassroots participation rates remain low, political aspirations to utilize sports and physical activity programmes to achieve health benefits will remain problematic (Green, 2007).

In 2010 the Australian Government released a report on Australian sport about a new pathway to success. Australia is at a critical junction. The traditional sporting systems focused on delivering high performance on the international stage through a ‘top down’ approach to sport. These served Australia well but there is a need for change. The active lifestyle that has played a significant role in establishing the nation’s identity, culture and international sporting reputation is being challenged by modern life. In order to regain a competitive edge there needs to be a strategic focus on collaboration, reform, and an investment across the entire sporting pathway from the grassroots up. This new approach is moving away from the divisive community versus elite sports debates of the past and developing a collaborative, efficient and integrated national sports system. There should be focus on growing participation for the benefit of the community as well as the high performance system. The Australian Sports Commission is tasked with the 2010 Australian Government’s whole-of-sport reform agenda, which includes:

- A Sports and Education Strategy - increase the role and effectiveness of sport in schools
- Requiring National Sports Organizations to have an increased focus on participation outcomes
- Introducing new funding and measures to address the particular issues affecting women’s participation, advancement and leadership in sport
- Recognizing the importance of quality coaching across the sporting spectrum
- Providing additional coaching and officiating training opportunities
• Doubling the talent identification program – ensuring that the future champions are both discovered and assisted to reach their full potential
• Increasing funding for the development pathway, doubling the Local Sporting Champions program and expanding the number of domestic competitions available for Australian athletes to compete in
• Introducing a new program to enable current and retired athletes to become role models
• Recognizing the critical role of volunteers to the entire sports system
• Boosting funding support for the high performance athletes and retention of high performance coaches
• Assisting the high performance athletes to attend and compete strongly in international competition
(Australian-Government, 2010).

This new agenda is partially reflected in the mission overview of the AOC. The Australian Olympic Team is the embodiment of the nation’s hopes, dreams and desires. The Australian Olympic movement promotes values to the youth of Australia which are not bounded by place, creed or time. The AOC is committed to promoting the Olympic ideals and values to all through sport. The AOC’s Annual Report of 2011 notes that the former Federal Sports Minister has proven to be equally committed to both improving participation and maintaining the international success. The Federal Government provided more support for the Olympic and Paralympic athletes. A recent benchmark study by the AOC however, show that Australia has been out-funded by other nations and now faces a massive challenge at the London Games to finish in the top 5 nations on both the gold and overall medal tallies (AOC, 2011).

2.2. History of the Sports system of the Netherlands
As we have established thus far it can be argued that Australia is one of the world’s most successful sporting countries and has a global sports image. This makes Australia an interesting case study for countries that have similar sports ambitions. The Netherlands is such a country and therefore will now be discussed in the following paragraphs of this literature review. Before the relevant Dutch sports literature is discussed however, an introduction into the history of the Netherlands might shed some light on the context from which the history and culture of the Dutch sports system derived.
In 4500 BC an agrarian society began to develop on a river delta on the periphery of the European continent. This region is now known as the Netherlands, although it was only from about 1590 that the first contours of modern-day Netherlands began to be mapped. From circa 1100, the country started to urbanise and developed into a trading hub due to its geographical position. By circa 1600, the provinces of Holland and Zeeland became important hubs for trade in Europe and the modern-day Netherlands continues to fulfil this function. It was also around this time that the country became the Republic of the Seven United Netherlands and was founded on rebellion. This Republic became a superpower in Europe in the seventeenth century: economically, politically and culturally. Dutch ships roamed the world and business was conducted in Asia, Africa and America as well. In the nineteenth century, the centralisation of the Dutch administration of the colonies led to lengthy wars. To this day however, the Netherlands still maintains strong ties with Surinam and the Antilles. The modern-day Dutch state was formed between 1795 and 1848. In 1848, the foundations for today’s constitutional monarchy were laid with the drafting of the Constitution. The rise of modern society started from circa 1870 when Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague and Utrecht began to grow into cities. At the end of World War I, the Netherlands were dragged into a world crisis even though it tried to avoid involvement in large conflicts in Europe. Reconstruction began immediately after the Netherlands were liberated in 1945 from German occupation during World War II. The 1950s were the start of a period of great change in the lifestyle of the Dutch population and a welfare state ensured a radical rise in the standard of living. In particular, the change was marked by less hierarchical relationships between parents and children, the rise of new male and female role patterns, and open views on sexuality. Politics moved strongly towards democratisation and the authority of established elite groups was called into question. During and after the colonial war between the Netherlands and the Indonesian independence movement, many Dutch, Indo-Europeans, and people from the Moluccas left for the Netherlands. In the 1960s, workers from the Mediterranean countries arrived. The further diversification of the Netherlands continued with immigration waves from the former colony of Surinam at the time of its decolonisation in 1975 and later from the Netherlands Antilles, as well as numerous other regions. Inevitably, Dutch society changed with this increasing immigration into the multicultural society as it is today (Oostrom, 2008).

In 1998, Dutch Professor Dr Maarten van Bottenburg concluded in his article ‘Historiography of the Dutch Sports History’ for the Dutch social science journal that there was little scientific information available about the history of sport in the Netherlands. During his research however, he was able to provide us with a general overview on how sport started in the
Netherlands. The term ‘sport’ was introduced in the Netherlands in 1866 but was not commonly used until the late 1870s. Before that, the Dutch used the terms ‘public entertainment’ or ‘game entertainment’ to describe activities that later would become known as sports (Bottenburg, 1998). Bottenburg (2000) explores the social history of sport in the Netherlands further and distinguishes several outlines in the development of sport. These outlines can be divided into three stages: firstly the emergence of sport (1880-1914), secondly forming versus performance striving (1914-1940), and thirdly diffusion and differentiation (1945-present). During the first stage the Dutch sports culture consisted of three sporting traditions: a domestic, a German, and an English tradition. At the beginning of the 20th century the Dutch domestic sports tradition played the biggest role in the sports culture. German influences were second biggest and were displayed through the number of gymnastic sports organizations. The influence of the English tradition was the smallest through English sports such as athletics, cricket, golf, hockey, and tennis. Sport in this stage was mainly aimed to generate welfare, civilize the nation, and physically educate the people. As the influences of the English sports grew, so did the discussion between the forming value of sport and the performance value of sport. A part of society consisting of educators, teachers, preachers and doctors favoured the gymnastic developments from Germany and fiercely resisted the English sports. During the second stage between 1914 and 1940, this resulted in large differences in the perceived value of sport within the Dutch society. In the context of physical education the forming value of sport was placed above the competition and performing values which were emphasized by sports organizations. The discussion of which of those values was more important led to sport never being a school subject but instead was always part of physical education or gymnastics. Also, within sports organizations the emphasis on competition sport grew but there always remained a tension between a focus on sports performance and development through sport. The last stage of the forming of Dutch sport took place after WWII. Apart from the English, German, and domestic influences, the Dutch sports culture gained a variety of other international influences. Directly after the war American influences were visible through the establishment of National Sports Organizations for basketball and volleyball. Another development after the war was the increased involvement of the Dutch Government in sport. The government expenditure for sport rose more quickly than other areas of culture and recreation directly after the war. This was caused by a larger demand for sports accommodations due to higher participation rates but also because of growing concerns about youth. There was a strong belief that next to family, and school and church, sport could provide an additional educational environment for the upcoming generation. The involvement of the government also led to the establishment of official sporting departments at communal, provincial, and
national levels. In 1959 the Dutch Sports Federation (NSF) was established and acted as an
umbrella organization for all National Sports Organizations. NSF ‘argued’ often with the
Dutch Government about who were to have the initiative in sporting policies and about the
priority of elite(performance) sports. In the beginning the Dutch Government focused on
grassroots or amateur sports rather than elite sports to the dislike of NSF and the Dutch
National Olympic Committee (NOC). It wasn’t until the late 1980s that a separate elite sports
policy was created (Bottenburg, 2000). In 1993, NSF and the NOC fused into NOC*NSF.

Today, Dutch sports manifest itself in many ways with recreational, performance, and
numerous other motives. Sport has professionalized and the meaning of sport for society has
changed and has become more diverse. The development and differentiation of sport to a
mass phenomenon is a characteristic 20th century development which occurred in Western
countries simultaneously. In the Netherlands however, this development was shaped by
existing cultural traditions and social influences. This created a specific Dutch sports culture
with its own sporting preferences and characteristic beliefs and discussions about sport
(Bottenburg, 2000).

As the history of sport has shown there has always been a focus on sports participation and
grassroots sports in the Netherlands. A focus on elite sports has increased since the late
1980s when for the first time separate elite sports policies were created. When the
Netherlands were placed within the top 10 best countries in the world on the medal table
during the 2000 Sydney Olympics this focus grew even further. At the same time however,
there always remained a high focus on sports participation and grassroots sports. This is
reflected in reports about sport in the Netherlands that have been published in 2003, 2006,
2008, and 2010 by the Dutch Social and Cultural Assessment Agency SCP. In 2005 the
government policy document ‘Time for Sport’ was published and explained the outlines for
the sporting policies for 2006-2010 and the three major themes ‘Exercise’, ‘Participation’, and
‘Performance’(VWS, 2005). In 2006, NOC*NSF started researching the possibility of
organizing the 2028 Olympics and Paralympics. The result of this study is the Olympic Plan
2028. In this plan the mission is to get the Netherlands to Olympic level through all levels of
sport. The plan concerns several ambitions like elite sports, sport for all, social welfare,
health, community planning, economics, and the organization of events (NOC*NSF, 2009).

After Time for Sport, the Sport Agenda 2012 ‘Sport Grows’ outlines the developments of
organized sports in the Netherlands until 2012. Characteristic for this Sport Agenda policy is
that it is derived from 73 NSO’s and NOC*NSF together and that this has then been adopted
by the Dutch Government. It is also in line with the overall ambition of the Olympic Plan 2028
and therefore contains three themes: ‘More people sport a life time’, ‘The Netherlands within the top 10 of the world’, and ‘National Sports Organizations capitalize opportunities’ (NOC*NSF, 2007). The latest Sport Agenda ‘Sport Inspires!’ was published recently and is effective from 2012 until 2016. The three major themes in this publication are ‘Sport participation target: 75%’, ‘Elite sports: among the world’s top 10’, and ‘Conditions for success’ (NOC*NSF, 2012a). It is evident from the reports and sport agendas that even with the overall objective of organizing the 2028 Olympics; the focus is still on all levels of sport but that the focus on performance is increasing.

A part of the Olympic Plan for 2028 is a top 10 ambition however; this ambition has existed since the Sydney 2000 Olympics. The ambition as it is described in the Olympic plan is stated by the Dutch sports community and supported by the government. It states that the Netherlands want to reach a position structurally within the top 10 competing countries at the Olympic Games. In order to reach this ambition the Dutch Olympic Committee has selected eight focus areas for elite sports success. Some conclusions of this report are that there should be more focus on successful elite athletes and elite athlete programs with the potential to become as successful as possible. Following the example of foreign countries, for example Australia, the Dutch elite sports would benefit by a more central control. Furthermore, the Netherlands should keep investing in improving the quality of elite athlete programs (NOC*NSF, 2011). In continuing to develop the country’s sports infrastructure, they hope this will contribute to the Dutch goal to host the 2028 Olympics.

2.3. Australia and the Olympics
There are numerous reasons why countries are motivated to host the biggest, most prestigious, peaceful multisport event in the world. Many of those reasons have a non-economic aim but they remain closely related to economic issues. For example, the Games provide a unique opportunity for politicians and industry to advance the improvement of infrastructure of sport, housing, communication, traffic and other sectors. There are also a number of political, ecological, cultural and social issues related to the Olympic Games. The gigantic scale of the Olympics and the huge finances required to stage them, would suggest that only the largest cities in the world could host the Games. The Olympics have grown in cost and revenue but also with respect to structure and organization over the past decades. The Olympics however, have no important economic dimension in relation to national accounts. Essentially, the Olympic Games have welcomed (economic) effects but also have limitations (Andreff & Szymanski, 2006).
Sydney was the third Australian city in a row to present candidature for hosting the Olympic Games between 1992 and 2000. Brisbane had bid for the 1992 Games, while Melbourne bid for 1996. It has been argued that Australia’s interest in staging the Olympics cannot just be explained on the ground of expected economic benefits and international exposure. A rooted passion for sport is manifested by day to day practices of most Australians and a widespread acceptance and interest in the Olympics is sown. The Sydney Olympic Bid emphasized these cultural factors to show the deep commitment and support of Australians for the Olympic Games. The Australian bid organizers promoted Australia, with its multicultural composition and Aboriginal cultures, as a unique place to explore the Olympic ideals of universal understanding (Gold & Gold, 2011). And so, when Sydney was awarded the 2000 Olympic Games in 1993, culture played an important part in the electoral procedure. Furthermore, Australia was regarded as a safe haven for the Olympics because it takes the Games seriously. Little effort was spared to make them a success, and there was no organized opposition. Success in international sport is regarded as evidence of the successful development of Australian society (Magdalinski, 2000).

The allocation of the Olympic Games to Sydney had an effect on the pace and direction of federal sports policy administration and funding. The strengthening of federal support for elite development grew in particular. The continuous growth and embedment of federal support for the development of elite athletes in Australia is mainly underscored by two issues. First, the general approach to sports policy during the 1990s became increasingly centralized with a Federal Government-funded administration structure (Green, 2007). The previously discussed ASC and the AIS were the foundation of this administrative structure and as mentioned before were responsible to balance their two main objectives towards mass participation and elite sports (Hogan & Norton, 2000). It remains questionable however, whether they ever achieved such a balance (Green, 2007). The second issue relates to funding allocations for sport where there seems to have been a reluctance to demonstrate the same commitment to creating mass participation as has been shown to improving elite performance (Commonwealth-of-Australia, 1999).

In order to prepare Australian athletes for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games the Olympic Athlete Program (OAP) was created. Its objectives were involvement and achievement. Through the OAP, the Federal Government aimed to create the largest Australian team possible and see them compete to the best of its ability during the Sydney Olympics. The Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) set the challenge for Australian sports to finish within the top five nations at the Sydney Olympic. The overriding principle of the
OAP was to ensure that funds were used most effectively for the preparation of Olympic athletes. Furthermore, the OAP was used to create and support:

- Employment of national coaches and visits by overseas coaches
- Establishment of Intensive Training Centres in the states and territories
- International competition
- Training camps
- High performance management of the sport’s OAP activities
- Dedicated sports science coordination
- Athlete support and development activities including enhancement of AIS programs (Australian-Sport-Commission, 1994).

From 1994 to 2000 most of the funding that went out to sport was for the Olympic Athlete Program. The objective of the OAP was to maximize success in the 2000 Olympics (Green, 2007). Most of the federal sports and recreation budget was directed towards elite athletes and based on the nation’s record for international sporting achievement; there is little doubt that the ASC’s first objective has been fulfilled. Data on physical activity patterns of Australians suggest however, that the second objective has not been met (Hogan & Norton, 2000). Even though it is not the main objective of this research, it does raises questions about why there has been so much focus on achieving global success while there was a second goal to be reached as well.

2.4. Influence of National Culture on Development and Change in Sports

Today, sport is a cultural institution and contributes to the vitality, vibrancy and international profile of a nation (Green, 2007). Australia’s global image is defined by sport and has a tradition of sports participation and takes sport seriously. Sport has the capacity to unite Australians and sport’s nation building capacity has been a feature of Australia’s development. The followers of Australian sport also use their sport to construct a sense of both personal and national identity. It has been embedded into the national psyche through a national sports policy that has focused on international sports achievement. This is due to an emotional investment in sport and an ongoing investment in sporting infrastructure by the Australian Government (Stewart, et al., 2004). Sport has played an important social and cultural role in Australia, providing a form of social cement which connects communities. Sport has helped to promote Australian symbols, emblems and colours, based on Australia’s flora and fauna, and have contributed to today’s national consciousness. Sport in Australia might be more deeply and culturally meaningful than in any other country (Cashman, 2003).
Dutch historian, cultural theorist and Professor Johan Huizinga discussed in 1938 in his book ‘Homo Ludens’ (Man the Player) the importance of a ‘play’ element in culture and society. Huizinga states that ‘play’ is a leisure activity that is executed selflessly without usefulness or necessity. Sport however, is a game that demands seriousness and takes place outside of the cultural process (Huizinga, 2010). Nowadays, this is refuted as sports historical research shows that sport does not come forth from ‘play’ but that sport is derived from a variety of activities with useful objectives and a display of skill and therefore is part of the cultural process (Bottenburg, 1998). Another view on the development of sports culture is presented by Gladwell (2008) who describes that (sports) culture and success is directly linked to the history of a country or a group of people within a certain field.

In his research on national cultural dimensions, Hofstede (2012) explains that Australia scores 61 on the masculinity dimension and is considered as a masculine society. Behaviour is therefore based on the shared values that people should strive to be the best they can be and that the winner takes all. Australians are proud of their successes and achievements in school, work and sport. Further research shows that the Netherlands and Australia are quite similar on the other four dimensions of national culture (Hofstede, 2012). The national cultural dimensions of the Netherlands and Australia are fully discussed in chapter 4.2.

Wursten (2012) discussed the impact of national cultural differences on the concept of change management and indicated that the preparation and implementation of change is highly culturally sensitive. Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions have implications for organizational models and what organizations expect from their people. Based on research and experience six clusters of countries have been identified, each cluster representing a certain combination of these five dimensions. These six clusters are:

1. Contest Cluster: In these cultures, people can be motivated to change if it benefits the next career step or gaining a material reward. Key to proposed change relates to well understood self-interest.

2. The Network Cluster: In these cultures, there is reluctance to believe that leaders or managers can define what is good for the organization from ‘higher positions’. The key in such cultures is defining shared interest.

3. Pyramid and Family Clusters: The privilege to define new priorities and directions lies at the top of the organization. The person at the top is supposed to indicate what he or she sees as the common interest.

4. Solar Cluster: The person at the top has the sole right to decide what the new directions and priorities should be because they have an overview of everything that
is taking place necessary to decide on new directions. The key in these cultures is future public interest.

5. Well-Oiled Machine Clusters: The most important issue is that perceived and recognized experts are the one who are believed to be in the position to define new directions. The key in these cultures is agreed upon balanced interests by experts.

Australia and other Anglo-Saxon countries belong to the Contest Cluster. The Netherlands together with Scandinavian countries belong to the Network Cluster. Hofstede’s five cultural dimensions and the Culture Clusters show that preparation and implementation of change is highly culturally sensitive (Wursten, 2012).

2.5. Conclusion Literature Review

Australia’s cultural and sporting history derived from its former colonial ties and remainders of the British Empire. When Australia’s social, cultural and physical landscape was in its formative stage during the 1850s sport played a prominent role. Since the Australian Government changed the sports system and moved towards a corporate and professional model, sport became highly regulated. With a new approach to sports policy Australia started to become more and more successful at competing on an international level. Today, Australia has a global image and is defined by sport that has been embedded into the national psyche through a national sports policy that focuses on international sports achievement. Australia and the Netherlands display similarities in population size, sports participation rates, GDP, and national culture but have very different outcomes related to sporting success. Differences are found in the origins of sports systems, today’s sports systems, and the history of both countries. Over time there has been much debate nationally and internationally whether or not Australia has focussed too much on performance and elite sports rather than adopting a holistic approach. Australia’s system has proven itself in terms of performance and international achievements and has now been adopted by other sporting nations to certain extents. It is apparent however, that the world of sport is changing and with it Australia has to change its sports system as well. Some of these same changes can also be identified in the Olympic Plans of the Netherlands. At the same time it is evident that the Netherlands have had a focus on the entire sports system for a while now and has always emphasized the grassroots level of sports. With the Olympic Plans however, there is also a specific focus on elite sports. Some of the aspects of the Olympic Plan could be related to the former Australian sports system. It is questionable however, if this is the right path and if these aspects can just be adapted to the sports system and culture of the Netherlands.
Therefore this dissertation will focus on Australia’s elite sports system as a case study from where lessons for the Dutch Olympic ambitions and the sport policy makers may be drawn.

2.6 Research Questions
This research will provide an overview on how the Australian sports system in Australia. The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of the Australian sports system with a focus on finding key success factors for success at the Olympic level that are of relevance to the Netherlands. Therefore, the main research questions are:

1. What are the key success factors in the Australian elite sports system?
2. In what ways could these success factors benefit the Dutch Olympic top 10 ambition?

As the literature review in the previous chapter has suggested, culture has played an important role in the rise of Australia’s sports system and is an influence on today’s sports policy. Therefore, the secondary research questions are:

How does national culture impact sport in Australia compared to the Netherlands?

What is the link between culture and Australia’s sporting success?

To what extent can Australia’s success factors of its sports system be implemented in the Netherlands in regard to national culture?

The next chapter will explain the methodology used to conduct this research.
3. Methodology

This chapter describes the procedure of this study and intends to be an objective presentation of the steps taken in this research. The form of this study is a so called ‘Applied Scientific Study’ where a question has been chosen to define a subject or issue that is relevant to a profession or industry. This study is conducted to conclude the fourth and final year of the Sport, Management and Business bachelor’s degree at the University of Applied Sciences of Amsterdam, the Netherlands. The physical execution of the study has been conducted during the second semester of a two-semester study abroad program at the University of Newcastle, Australia. The study has been supervised by senior lecturer Dr Jennifer Waterhouse of the Newcastle Business School. This study has been conducted according to the graduation manual of the University of Applied Sciences of Amsterdam, which is subject to the Dublin Descriptors (Joint-Quality-Initiative, 2004). The quality of the study has been assessed by the standards of a Master’s Research Project Dissertation and the assessment criteria used by the University of Newcastle.

The research of this dissertation is a qualitative content analysis of secondary research sources such as policy documents, annual reports, academic journals, and online databases. There are different approaches for analysing qualitative data. Krippendorff (2004) describes content analysis as a research method for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context, with the purpose of providing knowledge, a representation of facts, new insights, and a practical guide to action (Krippendorff, 2004). This qualitative content analysis is conducted using the deductive approach. Therefore, the structure of the analysis is structured on the basis of previous knowledge and moves from general qualitative data to specific qualitative data. The analysis process is represented as three main phases: preparation, organizing and reporting (Elo & Kyngäsh, 2008).

Preparation Phase:
The first step in this phase starts by choosing the research area of the analysis. This area needs to be large enough to be considered as a whole and small enough to suit the context in which this research is conducted. The context for this dissertation is set by the research questions that are relevant for the sports infrastructure of the Netherlands. The study researches the elite sports systems of Australia and the Netherlands by using manifest content. This content includes books, academic journals, policy documents, and online data recourses.
In the next step, a research strategy sets out the path to the literature and research that is used in this dissertation. Four main recourses determine where the parent data is collected from: online search engines, portals, URL’s, and databases. This dissertation prefers but is not limited to the use of peer reviewed academic work, databases such as EBSCO host, ‘EDU’ and ‘GOV’ URL’s, and scientific search engines such as Google Scholar. When a source is identified, it is checked for reliability and usefulness to the purpose of the analysis. This is done by asking questions such as:

- What is the reputation of the source?
- What kind of source is it?
- In what way is the literature applicable?
- Is the literature up-to-date?
- What references have been used for the literature?
- What is the purpose of the literature?
- Who is the author?
- Is it manifest content or latent content?

This step focuses primarily on collecting parent data on literature and research that is reliable and relevant to the research questions in this dissertation. After collecting this data, the next phase starts.

Organizing Phase:

This phase starts with identifying more specific research topics from the collected data. After organizing this data, five main topics are identified for further research:

1. Historical background of the formation and development of sports systems in Australia and the Netherlands
2. National culture of Australia and the Netherlands
3. Cultural influences in sport in Australia and the Netherlands
4. The sports system of Australia and the Netherlands
5. Present and future sports policies of Australia and the Netherlands

As a result a main guideline is identified to research points 4 and 5. This main guideline is a policy document written by the Dutch Olympic Committee NOC*NSF and supported by the Dutch Government. This document reveals eight focus areas for present and future sports policy in the Netherlands. These eight areas are used to further structure the research on both sports systems and present and future sports policies. Furthermore, the research includes analysis of the Dutch and Australian national (sport) cultures, in order to assess to which extent success factors of Australia’s elite sports system can be implemented in the Netherlands based on these national cultures. Geert Hofstede’s research on national cultural
dimensions forms the base and direction for research topic 2. In addition, books, academic journals, and online recourses provide the information for research topics 1 and 3.

**Reporting and Results:**
After all the data is collected and categorized, this phase reports the findings and provides the results. This is done by comparing the data and reporting differences and similarities and all other relevant data. This phase follows the structure of the rest of the dissertation in order to remain readable. The findings are discussed through a synthesis of the literature that forms part of this dissertation. The conclusions and recommendations that are derived from this research are eventually targeted at the elite sports system of the Netherlands and all the involved (sports) organizations, associations and key partners.

Having discussed the methodology, the next chapter reports the collected data using the described methodology.
4. Sports System and Culture Comparison

This chapter presents the research and data analysis of this study. It is presented in a way that suits the purpose of answering the research questions. The literature review in chapter 2 highlighted the history and development of the Australian and Dutch sports system and requires no further explaining at this moment. Therefore, this chapter begins with a general overview of Australia and the Netherlands regarding matters such as population size and GDP per capita. The next section discusses the national (sports) cultures of Australia and the Netherlands and includes Geert Hofstede’s research on National Cultural Dimensions. In the following section, the present and future sports system of the Netherlands is researched using the previously discussed eight focus areas of the Dutch Olympic top 10 ambition. This chapter concludes with an overview of Australia’s present and future sports system, using these same focus areas and sports policies and also includes three extra areas. The research in this chapter is presented to answer the research questions in chapter 6.

4.1. General Overview Australia and the Netherlands

This section provides a general overview of Australia and the Netherlands. Australia has transformed itself into an internationally competitive, advanced market economy. It lies on the continent of Oceania between the Indian Ocean and the South Pacific Ocean. It is also the world’s smallest continent but sixth largest country. The size of the population is roughly 22.6 million of which 89% lives in urban areas. The government is a federal parliamentary democracy with a Commonwealth realm. The country is divided into 6 states and 2 territories. Australia's abundant and diverse natural resources attract high levels of foreign investment and include extensive reserves of coal, iron ore, copper, gold, natural gas, uranium, and renewable energy sources. The GDP per capita in 2011 was 40,800 US dollar and placed the country 19th when compared to the world (CIA, 2012). GDP per capita has been growing since 1999 when it was 22,200 US dollar with the biggest growth from 2006 33,300 USD to 2007 37,300 USD (IndexMundi, 2012b). More similarities between the Netherlands and Australia are found when studying the reports of the United Nations Development Programme on Human Development. Human Development as an approach is concerned with the basic development idea of advancing richness of human life, rather than the richness of the economy in which human beings live. The Human Development Index (HDI) for 2011 shows that Australia ranked 2nd with a HDI of 0.929, and the Netherlands ranked 3rd with a HDI of 0.910, therefore both categorized as countries with very high human development (UNDP, 2011).
The Netherlands is a modern industrialized nation and also a large exporter of agricultural products. It lies in Western Europe, bordering the North Sea, between Belgium and Germany. The whole country fits a little over 19 times into the state of New South Wales of Australia alone and ranks as the 135th largest country in the world. The size of the population is about 16.7 million of which 83% lives in urban areas. The government is a constitutional monarchy. The country is divided into 12 provinces. The Dutch economy is the fifth-largest economy in the euro-zone and is noted for its stable industrial relations, moderate unemployment and inflation, a sizable trade surplus, and an important role as a European transportation hub. Industrial activity is predominantly in food processing, chemicals, petroleum refining, and electrical machinery. A highly mechanized agricultural sector employs only 2% of the labour force but provides large surpluses for the food-processing industry and for exports. The GDP per capita in 2011 was 42,300 US dollar and placed the country 17th when compared to the world (CIA, 2012). GDP per capita has been growing from 1999 when it was 23,100 US dollar until 2008 with the biggest growth from 2006 32,100 USD to 2007 39,000 USD. After a small decline in between the years 2008 and 2009 GDP has been growing again until this date (IndexMundi, 2012a).

4.2. (Sport) Culture of the Netherlands and Australia

The aim of this section is to provide a general understanding of the Dutch and Australian (sport) culture. In order to provide such an understanding it is hard to ignore the work of Hofstede. He has conducted comprehensive studies on national culture and developed five national cultural dimensions in which values that distinguish countries can be compared. These dimensions are often used in understanding organizational culture and supports organizational change as well. In a way, implementing change in an existing sports system can be considered as changing part of an existing organization. Therefore, it can be important to have an understanding of the cultural dimensions that influence the culture of such an organization. It is important to realize though, that the country scores on the dimensions are relative. Without comparing scores on cultural dimensions to another country is meaningless. The five national cultural dimensions are:

- **Power Distance (PDI):** The degree to which the less powerful members of a society accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.
- **Individualism versus collectivism (IDV):** A preference for a loosely-knit social framework with individuals taking care of themselves and their immediate families only versus a tightly-knit framework society where individuals are been taken care of by relatives or members of a particular in-group in exchange of their loyalty.
• Masculinity versus femininity (MAS): A society that is at large more competitive versus a society that is at large more consensus-oriented.
• Uncertainty avoidance (UAI): The degree of which the members of a society feel uncomfortable with uncertainty and ambiguity.
• Long-term versus short-term orientation (LTO): Dealing with society’s search for virtue versus a strong concern with establishing the absolute Truth (Hofstede, 2012).

In an exploration of links between history and success Gladwell (2008), describes how cultural and historical background may provide an explanation for the success some people or generations have within a certain field. He describes a strong connection between how good a pilot is and the culture where the pilot is from. He even suggests a connection between culture and crashes. In the same way he explains why Chinese children learn how to count much faster, because of the number system in China. It is because Chinese number words are remarkably brief when compared to the English equivalent. In regards to sport, he explains why China is so good in precision sports like table tennis. It requires a huge amount of repetition of the same movement. He relates this to the fact that over centuries most Chinese people have been rice farmers. In order to make a living and generate food, it requires thousands of repetitive movements to create a rice paddy. So precision became part of the Chinese culture and is embedded in their genes. Nowadays, Chinese athletes display high achievements in sports where repetition and discipline is required (Gladwell, 2008). The following subsections discuss how the national cultural dimensions apply to the Netherlands and Australia as well as other research regarding the national culture of both countries.

4.2.1. General National Culture of the Netherlands
The scores on the five cultural dimensions for the Netherlands used by Hofstede (2012) are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimension</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PDI</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDV</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MAS</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UAI</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LTO</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Power distance (38):**
The characteristics for the Dutch style are: being independent, hierarchy for convenience only, equal rights, superiors being accessible, coaching leadership, and management facilitates and empowers. Power is decentralized and managers count on the experience of
their team members. Employees expect to be consulted. Control is disliked and attitude towards managers are informal and on first name base. Communication is direct and participative.

**Individualism (80):**
The Netherlands is an individualistic society. This means there is a high preference for a loosely-knit social framework. Offences in an individualistic society causes guilt and a loss of self-esteem, the employer/employee relationship is a contract based on mutual advantage, hiring and promotion decisions are supposed to be based on merit only, management is the management of individuals.

**Masculinity / Femininity (14):**
With this score, the Netherlands is considered to be a feminine society. It is therefore, important to keep life-work balance while making sure that all are included. An effective manager is supportive to people, and decision making is achieved through involvement. Managers strive for consensus and people value equality, solidarity, and quality in their working lives. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation and Dutch are known for their long discussions until consensus has been reached.

**Uncertainty avoidance (53):**
The Netherlands exhibits a preference for avoiding uncertainty and maintains rigid codes of belief towards behaviour, and is intolerant of unorthodox behaviour and ideas. There is an emotional need for rules even if these rules never seem to work. Time is money, people have an inner urge to be busy and work hard, precision and punctuality are the norm, innovation may be resisted, and security is an important element in individual motivation.

**Long-term orientation (44):**
The Dutch culture is relatively short-term orientated and therefore generally exhibit great respect for traditions, a relatively small propensity to save, strong social pressure to keep up with the majority, impatience for achieving quick results, and a strong concern with establishing the Truth (Hofstede, 2012).

The Dutch Government’s Social and Cultural Assessment Agency (SCP) publishes roughly every two years a report on sport in the Netherlands. The report of 2008 also takes notice of the Dutch culture in regard to how it impacts sport. Millions of people in the Netherlands participate in sport. Sport shows are among the best viewed television shows. Developments
in sport are in line with the broader developments of society. Information technologies provide a new dimension to sport, with access to publication of scores, rankings, and participation of the viewers. It brought sport and athletes closer to the public. Sport has become more and more a way to ‘escape’ day to day business. At the same time individualism has grown and people are less involved with co-workers, family, and people from the neighbourhood. Sport however, provides a platform for people to still connect and engage with each other. The country has also become more informal which reflects in the way sport emotions are displayed. The image of the Prime Minister enjoying a beer at the Olympics of Beijing amongst the celebrating public is well accepted. Sport in the Netherlands displays more and more characteristics of a mature industry instead of being just a leisure activity. The sports sector is increasingly growing towards being a big business. Furthermore, sport gets more roles and responsibilities and is been put to use to educate children, help integrate immigrants, and fight obesity (SCP, 2008).

4.2.2. General National Culture of Australia
The scores on the five cultural dimensions for Australia used by Hofstede (2012) are:

- **PDI** = 36
- **IDV** = 90
- **MAS** = 61
- **UAI** = 51
- **LTO** = 31

*Power distance (36):*
Within Australian organizations, hierarchy is established for convenience, superiors are always accessible and managers rely on individual employees and reams for their expertise. Both managers and employees expect to be consulted and information is shared frequently. At the same time, communication is informal, direct, and participative.

*Individualism (90):*
Australia is considered to be a highly individualistic culture. This translates into a loosely-knit society where people are expected to look after themselves and their immediate families. In the business world, employees are expected to be self-reliant and display initiative. Also, within the exchange-based world of work, hiring and promotion decisions are based on merit or evidence of what one has done or can do.
Masculinity / Femininity (61):
In Australia’s ‘masculine’ society, behaviour in school, work, and play are based on shared values that people should strive to be the best they can be, and that the winner takes all. Australians are proud of their successes and achievements in life, and it offers a basis for hiring and promotion decisions in the workplace. Conflicts are resolved at the individual level and the goal is to win.

Uncertainty avoidance (51):
With the score on this dimension, Australia is a fairly pragmatic culture in terms of uncertainty avoidance. This means that both generalists and experts are needed. There is a focus on planning, and they can be altered at short notice and improvisations made. Emotions are not shown much; people are fairly relaxed, and not averse to taking risks. Consequently, there is a larger degree of acceptance for new ideas, innovative products and a willingness to try something new, whether it pertains to technology, business practices, or foodstuffs.

Long-term orientation (31):
As a result of the short-term oriented culture of Australia, it is focused on traditions and fulfilling social obligations. Given this perspective, Australian businesses measure their performance on a short-term basis, with profit and loss statements being issues. This also drives individuals to strive for quick results within the work place. Furthermore, there is a need to have the absolute truth in all matters (Hofstede, 2012).

The Australian Sports Commission in consultation with the sports industry has written ‘The Essence of Australian Sport’, which provides a statement on what sport in Australia ‘stands for’ with its core principles and values. Australian players of sport at all levels strive to uphold the principles of:

- Fairness; operating in the spirit of the rules, never taking an unfair advantage and making informed and honourable decisions at all times.
- Respect; recognising the contribution people make to sport, treating them with dignity and consideration, as well as caring for the property equipment they use.
- Responsibility; taking responsibility and being a positive role model at all times.
- Safety; encouraging healthy and safe procedures and preventing and reporting dangerous behaviour, while demonstrating concern for others.
• Australians are perceived to be proud of their sporting ability and reputation of good sports, and the society expects high standards of behaviour from all people involved in sport (ASC, 2012b).

4.3. Sports System of the Netherlands

The elite sports in the Netherlands find its foundations in grassroots sports or amateur sports. Millions of Dutch sports in clubs and elite athletes are derived from this club culture. The Dutch Olympic Committee NOC*NSF indirectly represents about 25,000 sporting clubs with about 4.7 million athletes (NOC*NSF, 2011). It is the opinion of NOC*NSF that the elite sports cannot go without grassroots sports en vice versa. This is consistent with the belief that the broad participation in grassroots sports ‘push’ the better performing athletes towards the elite level and that the existing elite athletes will ‘draw’ potential athletes higher up the performance pyramid (Hogan & Norton, 2000). During the Sydney Olympics of 2000 the Netherlands scored a top 10 ranking on the medal tally. That is when NOC*NSF formulated the ambition to structurally rank within this top 10 of best sporting nations of the world. This top 10 ambition is now part of the Olympic Plan to organize the Olympic and Paralympic Games of 2028. Ever since the Sydney Olympics however, a ranking amongst the top 10 countries has not been achieved again. Therefore, NOC*NSF together with the Dutch Government created a plan to realize these ambitions and created a document that sets a path towards a ranking amongst the top 10 sporting countries of the world. This document described eight areas of focus. These areas define sports policy, sports funding and sports culture. A clear choice has been made to focus on success. For example, all 209 elite sports programmes are divided into five groups. The group with the highest performance is entitled to the most funding. In this way NOC*NSF and the Dutch Government focuses on success with their scopes aimed at top 10 ambition. Furthermore, it is the believe of NOC*NSF that a more centralized control of sport will be more effective for the elite sports in the Netherlands (NOC*NSF, 2011). The 8 areas of focus are therefore also to create this more centralized control structure and will now be further described in the following subsections. When a subsection doesn’t refer to a specific source, NOC*NSF (2011) was used.

4.3.1. Elite Sports Infrastructure

The infrastructure of elite sports has a focus on elite athletes and high potential talented athletes. NOC*NSF is the umbrella organization above all National Sports Organizations in the Netherlands. Just underneath that operates an Olympic network called ‘Organisatie Olympisch Netwerk Nederland’ (ONNL). The ONNL consists of 3 metropolitan networks and 10 provincial networks and every National Sports Organization is represented by one them.
Each ONNL is responsible to establish the Netherlands as a true sporting nation with sport as a means and sport as a goal. They are to create continuity in several areas, such as: reinforcing NSO’s, talent development, and facilitating elite athletes. Their main focus lies on established elite athletes as well as up and coming talents (Olympisch-Netwerk, 2012). On local level operates the foundation LOOT. This is a partnership between 29 secondary schools that support high potential athletes in combining their elite sports with school. This is the earliest form where talented athletes are guided to combine their elite sports with everyday life (LOOT, 2012). Furthermore, the previously mentioned CTO’s and NTC’s are also part of the elite sports infrastructure of the Netherlands. At this moment there is no need for further expansion of the number of CTO’s. However, each CTO has developed a number of unique selling points:

- Sports laboratory for swimming (CTO Eindhoven)
- Development of sustainable facilities (CTO Heerenveen)
- Multifunctional and temporary facilities (CTO Papendal)
- Talent around talent program (CTO Amsterdam)

Elite athletes, coaches, experts and facilities are brought together with training, education, and housing on the locations of these CTO’s and NTC’s (NOC*NSF, 2011).

4.3.2. Elite Sports Programs

The initial responsibility for elite sports programs in the Netherlands lies with the National Sports Organizations. They are expected to develop and organize their own programs after analysing the international competition, upon which they set their own goals and ambitions. The technical staff of NOC*NSF will assist where necessary (NOC*NSF, 2011). The quality of the programs is assessed by an elite athlete assessment protocol, called the ‘Topsport Programma Assessment’ (TPA). The TPA assesses the programs on a number of critical success factors, such as leadership and control, planning and strategy, training and competition schedule, and performance. According to the results, the TPA develops an annual action plan together with the technical staff of NOC*NSF (TPA, 2012).

As mentioned before, there are about 200 elite athlete programs throughout the Netherlands but it exceeds the purpose of this study to mention them all or to provide a complete overview. There are nationwide elite athlete programs however, that overlap all the sporting organizations. Two of these nationwide programs are ‘Centra voor Topsport en Onderwijs’ (CTO) and ‘Nationale Topsport Centra’ (NTC). A CTO is a high performance training centre, where fulltime trainings are combined with residency and education. There are 4 CTO’s throughout the Netherlands at this moment. NTC’s are quite similar with the biggest difference being that the training centres suit the purpose of a field of sport. For example,
there is a NTC for specifically triathletes. There are 5 NTC’s in the Netherlands. A third nationwide program is the Collective Olympic Facilities (COF). The COF provides investments in high quality guidance, recruitment and employment of fulltime coaches, and deployment of experts for the purpose of elite athlete programs (NOC*NSF, 2011).

4.3.3. Elite Sports Funding

Financial support of elite sports programs in the Netherlands originates from three sources: the government department of Health, Welfare, and Sport, the LOTTO, and the corporate community who are the so called ‘Partners in Sport and Suppliers of NOC*NSF. The amounts in the following sections are changed from EUR to AUD using a current exchange rate and are therefore not completely accurate or up to date.

**Department of Health, Welfare, and Sport**

Public funds from this ministry department are roughly 24.3 million AUD a year and covers:

- Facilities for elite athletes
- Facilities for elite coaches and talent coaches
- Educational programs for talented athletes
- Elite athlete medical facilities
- Participation and preparation costs for the Olympics and Paralympics

(NOC*NSF, 2011).

**LOTTO**

The LOTTO is a gambling organization that exists since 1961 and its establishment was stimulated by the Dutch Government to partially benefit sports. Most of the proceeds of the LOTTO are compulsory donated to sport in the Netherlands (LOTTO, 2012). NOC*NSF acts as umbrella organization for the National Sports Organizations and determines in an annual general meeting how the funds are distributed. The funds from the LOTTO are roughly 15.5 million AUD a year and covers:

- Training and competition schedules of elite and talented athletes
- Facilities for elite athletes
- Employment of technical directors

(NOC*NSF, 2011).

**Partners and Suppliers of NOC*NSF**

Private funds are roughly 7 million AUD a year and are exclusively available for successful Olympic and Paralympic Games.
This means that there is roughly 46.8 million AUD a year available for elite athlete programs. Furthermore, there is roughly 16.1 million AUD a year available for other elite athlete purposes, which makes the total funds for elite athletes roughly 62.9 million AUD a year.

Funds for competing Olympic countries are (in Australian dollars):

- Germany: 276 million
- France: 251 Million
- England: 202 Million
- Italy: 169 million
- Canada: 125 million
- Japan: 95 million
- South Korea: 94 million

(NOC*NSF, 2011).

It is important to mention that elite sports and National Sports Organizations in the Netherlands as well as Australia receive additional funding through several other ways including direct sponsorship deals, corporate support, and revenues through memberships. For this dissertation however, only the funds that have been made available through policies has been mentioned. The total funds that are available for both sports systems are higher. This also counts for subsection 4.4.3.

4.3.4. Professional Guidance

The Netherlands evaluated the performance of the Dutch Olympic squad during the 2008 Beijing Olympics. This evaluation suggested that there was a need for more technical directors within sports organizations to reinforce management and coordination of the elite athlete programs, and strengthen the Dutch elite sports culture (Technical-Directors, 2009). Through an arrangement 20 fulltime technical directors have now been appointed. Their aim is to further professionalize elite sports organizations of the NSO’s. These technical directors have the mandate to take decisions that are necessary for the optimal performance of elite athlete programs (NOC*NSF, 2011).

4.3.5. Position of the Elite Athlete

To obtain the official status of an elite athlete in the Netherlands you need to comply with the Status Regulations of NOC*NSF. Each year the number of elite athletes is determined according to these regulations. The elite athletes are divided into three categories:

- A-status: Elite athletes that belong to the global top 8 of their sport
• B-status: Elite athletes that belong to the global top 16 of their sport
• HP-status: Athletes with an extraordinary potential to quickly connect to the global top 3 of their sport

There are roughly 750 athletes in the Netherlands that have obtained the status of an elite athlete according to these regulations (NOC*NSF, 2010). National Sports Organizations are appointed to guide these elite athletes the best way possible and realize high quality training and competition schedules. Elite athletes are supported by NOC*NSF, Partners in Sport and Suppliers, the ministry department of Health, Welfare, and Sport, and the Olympic Network in financial and material means. Elite athletes, however have to keep performing on the highest levels of competition in order to maintain their status and these resources (NOC*NSF, 2011).

4.3.6. Position of the Coach and Specific Experts

While the facilities for elite athletes have been improving since the 90s, the position of coaches and experts has been lagging behind. Primary and secondary working conditions were poor and there were very little resources to compensate for their efforts. There also was very little education available for coaches. The Dutch Government therefore financed programs like ‘Coaches at the Top’, and ‘Talent Coaches’. These programs are executed by NOC*NSF and employed until 2010 91 coaches and 44 talent coaches in elite sports and educational programs. These coaches are primarily responsible for the fulltime training and coaching of elite athletes and talents. There are also several services available for the personal development of coaches like ‘Master Coach in Sports’ and ‘Top Coach 5’ (Top-Coach, 2009). Finally, NOC*NSF has created a network of experts who are active on areas of physical training, nutrition, mental support, performance diagnostics, and medical expertise. These experts play a crucial role in the development of elite sports programs by supporting the coaches. This network of experts has been created after the evaluation of the performance of the Dutch Olympic team during the 2004 Athens Olympics (NOC*NSF, 2011).

4.3.7. Talent Development

Another outcome from the evaluation of the 2004 Athens Olympics was that there is room for improvement where it comes to talent development. This resulted in a ‘Master Plan for Talent Development’ issued by NOC*NSF as part of the elite sports policies. Emphasis in this plan lies on a multi-year educational plan for talents under supervision by National Sports Organizations, and the infrastructure for talents. Outcomes of this plan include:

• Improvements in guiding growth from talent to elite athlete
• Education programs with enough time to train
Specialized coaches for talents
Equal facilities for talents and elite athletes
Strong control of sports organizations on regional and local initiatives
Introduction of the High Potential (HP) status
(Masterplan, 2006).

To this day National Sports Organizations have developed 98 education programs that describe the proposed growth routes of talents towards elite athletes. The aim is to create a foundation for a lifetime of sport and starts with talent identification at a young age. These multi-year educational plans are based on the Canadian ‘Long Term Athlete Development (LTAD) program (NOC*NSF, 2011). LTAD is a seven-stage training, competition and recovery pathway guiding an individual’s experience in sport and physical activity from infancy through all phases of adulthood (LTAD, 2012). A new and important part of talent development is talent identification. Up until now sporting talents have been recognized and selected by performance. Talent identification however, tries to systematically search for talent. There is no uniform method for this and every sport has to develop its own way depending on sports specific characteristics and the sports infrastructure. Talent identification distinguishes three types of sports:

1. Early specialization sports, such as gymnastics, tennis and ice skating
2. Sports that require broad training, such as team-sports
3. Late specialization sports, such as rowing and cycling

The talent identification structure firstly, gives advice about sport where success and enjoyment go hand in hand and secondly, searches for unique qualities in young athletes that make them very suitable for a specific sport (NOC*NSF, 2011).

4.3.8. Scientific Support

The Netherlands acknowledged that the gaps between winning and losing are becoming marginal and requires state of the art equipment. It has therefore recently appointed a fulltime coordinator for scientific support with access to a network of scientific institutions. An important part of the required knowledge derives from areas other than sport. This includes expertise on areas such as nutrition, psychological support, medical support, performance diagnostics, physical training and sports equipment. The consulted experts are active in the highest national levels of their expertise. Furthermore, there is a partnership with InnoSportNL, which was founded in 2006 by NOC*NSF and the Dutch national technical research institute NTO (NOC*NSF, 2011). InnoSportNL aims to be the link between sport, science, and the corporate world in the Netherlands. It initiates, facilitates, and realizes the development of innovative products and services for Dutch elite athletes. InnoSportNL’s aims is to allow athletes to achieve high performance and in return contribute to the Dutch Olympic top 10 ambition (InnoSportNL, 2012).
4.4. Sports System of Australia

In the previous sections we have learned about the eight areas of focus within the Dutch Olympic aspirations. This is the path which has been chosen by the Dutch Government, NOC*NSF, Partners in Sport, and sports federations and NSO’s. That is why these next sections research these same eight areas within the Australian sports system. The findings and implications of this research will be addressed in the following chapters.

4.4.1. Elite Sports Infrastructure

The Australian Sports Commission (ASC) is placed within the highest level of Australia’s sports infrastructure. It is a statutory authority within the government’s nationwide, regional, arts, and sports portfolio. The ASC is governed by the board of commissioners appointed by the Australian Government and is focused on getting more Australians participating and excelling in sport, by:

- Delivering key programs in line with the government’s sports policy objectives
- Providing financial support and other assistance to National Sports Organizations
- Building collaboration, alignment and effectiveness within the Australian sports sector.

The ASC operates from the AIS in Canberra and is also the controlling body of the AIS. It also has close to 60 Active After-School Communities (AASC) program offices throughout Australia (ASC, 2012a). AASC’s are a national initiative that provides primary school children with access to free sport and other structured physical activity programs after school time and aims to engage traditionally inactive children to develop a love of sport that inspires them to join a local sporting club (AASC, 2012).

In Canberra lies the Australian Institute of Sport (AIS) and was opened on Australia day in 1981. Its mission at the time was to develop elite sports in Australia by providing facilities and funding to sports organizations and potential elite athletes. The AIS started out in Canberra alone but now has partner State Sport Institutes and Academies:

- South Australian Sports Institute (SASI) since 1982
- West Australian Institute of Sport (WAIS) since 1984
- Tasmanian Institute of Sports (TIS) since 1985
- ACT Academy of Sports (ACTAS) since 1989
- Victorian Institute of Sport (VIS) since 1990
- Queensland Academy of Sport (QAS) since 1991
- New South Wales Institute of Sport (NSWIS) since 1996
- Northern Territory Institute of Sport (NTIS) since 1996
Through the National Elite Sports Council (NESC) these 8 State and Territory Institutes and Academies and the AIS form a national network of principal providers of elite sports programs and services (AIS, 2012).

The Olympic spirit in Australia is carried by the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC) and tends to spread Olympic ideals throughout the wider community of Australia. The AOC is committed to Australia’s athletes and encourages the development of high performance sport through athlete support and funding initiatives. The AOC provides training centres at the 8 State and Territory Institutes and Academies and the AIS. The AOC is a non-profit organization and is an incorporated association with state Olympic council representatives in every State and Territory (AOC, 2012).

A special part of the AIS is the European Training Centre based in Italy. It is a facility for Australian athletes and offers sports science and sports medicine capabilities. It is part of an investment by the Australian Government to allow Australian athletes to have access to the best facilities in the region, as well as athlete career and education supports, all within the competition opportunities that Europe offers. The aim is to maintain competitive advantage when Australia’s athletes are training or competing overseas (ETC, 2012).

### 4.4.2. Elite Sports Programs

The home base for Australia’s major elite sports program is the AIS, which these days provide approximately 700 scholarships to athletes each year in 35 disciplines of sport through a network of coaches on campuses in Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide, Perth and a number of regional centres. These athletes receive top level coaching, access to equipment, sports science and medicine facilities, accommodation, meals and travel, and assistance with education and career planning. The institute’s world class facilities and services are spread over 65 hectare and is considered as a symbol of excellence (AIS, 2012). At the AIS athletes are also prepared for life away from the sporting arena through the Athlete Career and Education (ACE) program. This program aims to provide nationally consistent services that assist elite athletes to undertake education, vocation and personal development opportunities while pursuing and achieving excellence in sport. ACE advisers arrange for elite athletes to receive training in public speaking, media presentation, career planning, and time management (ACE, 2012).

The majority of elite athletes in Australia will be part of the elite sports programs within the AIS or the network of the state institutes and academies of sport. For the athletes that fall
outside of this cohort, there are elite sports programs within so called Elite Athlete Friendly University (EAFU) programs. These programs are committed to support the endeavours of an elite athlete and combine this with their academic ambitions. For athletes to access the support of the EAFU, they must be identified and recognized by one of the following organizations as an elite athlete:

- Australian Institute of Sport
- State Institutes or Academies of Sport
- AFL Players’ Association
- Australian Cricketers’ Association
- Rugby Union Players’ Association
- Rugby League Professionals’ Association
- Australian Professional Footballers’ Association
- National senior squad members from ACE supported sports

Throughout the states and territories of Australia there are now a total of 45 Elite Athlete Friendly Universities (EAFU, 2012).

### 4.4.3. Elite Sports Funding

In the 2009 report Australian Sport a Pathway to Success by the Australian Government it is stated that the reform of the Australian sports system is boosted over the 2010-2014 years by 1.2 billion AUD. This includes an ongoing boost to the ASC of roughly 325 million AUD per year (Australian-Government, 2010). In a media release on 08 May 2012 by Senator Kate Lundy, she states about the continued support for Australian sport. In 2012-2013 the more than 300 million AUD funding for sport includes more than 120 million in funding to promote community participation and approximately 170 million is dedicated to Australia’s elite athletes and high performance sport programs (Lundy, 2012). To help achieve Australian team objectives the AOC provides funding to National Sports Organizations, athletes and Coaches. AOC funding is derived from income distributions for the Australian Olympic Foundation, grants from the IOC, the licensing and sponsorship activities of the AOC, and fundraising by the AOC, State Olympic Councils and their Corporate Appeal Committees (AOC, 2012). The financial statements of the annual AOC report of 2011 states that the total revenues of these income distributions were roughly 13 million AUD. Furthermore, president of the AOC John Coates states that a total of 35 million AUD was acquired through a sponsorship program (AOC, 2011). That brings the total funding for elite sports in 2011 to roughly 220 million AUD.
4.4.4. Professional Guidance
Coaching in Australia has been around as long as there has been organized sport. The majority of Australia’s coaches receive no financial remuneration or benefit for the time and effort they put into coaching. The ASC provides online support for coaches. This support includes information on planning, program management, skill analysis, nutrition, psychology and sports sciences. All information comes in online articles and has its own database (Coaching, 2012). The next step is becoming an accredited coach and is to ensure that coaches provide quality service. The National Coaching Accreditation Scheme (NCAS) is Australia’s system of training and accrediting coaches in more than 70 sports. The NCAS is an initiative of the ASC and a progressive coach education program offering courses at various levels (NCAS, 2012). The new sports agenda of the ASC includes an extra focus on coaches with:

- Recognising the importance of quality coaching across the sporting spectrum and introducing new funding, training, support and mentoring to assist coaches
- Providing additional coaching and officiating training opportunities for up to 45,000 community coaches and funding for 5,000 new community coaches
- Boosting funding support for the retention of high performance coaches.
(Australian-Government, 2010).

4.4.5. Position of the Elite Athlete
Athletes in Australia are primarily supported in their sport by scholarships. The main providers of these scholarships are the AIS, ACE and EAFU’s. The selection criteria used for each scholarship varies based on the sport, but will usually require Australian citizenship and national championship-level performance. The scholarships include coaching, facilities and access to a network of expertise (AIS, 2012). An AIS Athletes Commission oversees the scholarships provided by the AIS. The commission consists of current and former AIS scholarship holders and are selected each year by nomination. This group of 10 athletes aim to promote communication among the numerous scholarships athletes and programs, and advise AIS management (ACE, 2012). To be able to compete in the Olympic an Athlete need to be officially selected for the Olympic Team. This year of the 2012 London Olympics the AOC intends to send a team of around 400 athletes. Team selection takes place on a 3 step process:

1. Qualification under the International Federation Qualification System
2. Nomination under the NF Nomination Criteria
3. Selection under the AOC Selection Criteria
The International Federation Qualification System has been released by the IOC and is different for each sport. The NF nomination is overseen by the NF Athlete Commission and is different for each sport. This commission exists of athletes alone, who are nominated by peers. The AOC selection criteria also vary for each sport and are overseen by the Athlete Commission. An Olympic appeals consultant is appointed by the AOC to review the Olympic Team selection and is available to discuss with athletes contemplating an appeal for their non-nomination by their NF or the AOC (Team-Processing, 2012).

4.4.6. Position of Specific Experts and Scientific Support
Elite Athletes have access to the AIS Sports Science and Sports Medicine which include: AIS Movement Science – Biomechanics, Performance Analysis and Skill Acquisition, Aquatic testing and research, Performance Recovery, Physical Therapies, Physiology, Psychology, Medicine, Strength and Conditioning, and Quality Assurance. These services are available at each of the AIS departments throughout the country and via EAFU’s. The start of this Innovation, research, science and technology centres are derived from the Australian Government document ‘The Pathway to Success’ and are to be the drivers of Australian sporting excellence in the coming decades. The AIS performance research centre coordinates the research process and is integrated into the daily training environment. Several research programs are linked to partnerships to increase the capabilities of the performance centre (AIS, 2012).

4.4.7. Talent Development
The focus on talent identification and development has become a priority for the Australian Sports Commission who has introduced the National Talent Identification and Development (NTID) program. The NTID aims to identify, select and develop athletes for major national and international competitions for the London 2012 Olympics and beyond. The NTID program has a broad base and has implemented close partnerships with most NSO’s. Talent identification and development by the NTID is supported by evidence-based research with ties to a number of PhD students and their supervisors. Employment of career and part time coaches and their professional development is a crucial component of the NTID programs and approximately 75 coaches will be employed across all programs. To ensure success a strong and integrated approach is considered to be essential thus, State and Regional Institutes and Academies of Sport are involved as part of this network. Also an electronic self-identification system is under construction (ASC, 2012c).
4.4.8. Other Areas

Role of elite sports within education
The AOC has developed several programs within the department of education to involve children in the Olympic movement. For the youngest of children there is the ‘BK Zone’, the home of the boxing kangaroo. It is an interactive website where children can chat to a champ; learn the latest about the Olympic Games, and much more. The website aims to get children active and involved (BK-Zone, 2012). For children within the primary and secondary education levels a national education program is developed called the ‘ASPIRE School Network’. ASPIRE stands for Attitude, Sportsmanship, Pride, Individual responsibility, Respect, and Express yourself. The program is designed to instil in young Australians an appreciation for the values, spirit and philosophy of the Olympic movement (ASPIRE, 2012). All secondary government and non-government schools are invited to nominate one recipient for the Pierre de Coubertin Award, named after the founder of the modern Olympic Games. The nominee is awarded if he or she has participated actively in the school’s physical education program with a consistently positive attitude. At some stage during the years 8-12 the nominee must have represented the school in at least one sport on the current Olympic program and participated in at least two other sports. Finally, a piece of original literary or artistic needs to be admitted which illustrates the student’s appreciation for the Olympic movement (PdC-Award, 2012). Furthermore, at the University of Technology Sydney is located the Australian Centre for Olympic Studies (ACOS). The aim of the ACOS is to conduct research, designed to enhance knowledge and understanding of the Olympic Games and develop the Olympic Games as a field of study at the tertiary level (ACOS, 2012).

The Team behind the Team
For the athletes of the Australian Olympic Team the AOC has put together ‘The Team behind the Team’, to lead and guide the current Olympic Team. Another aspect of the Australian Olympic Team is the group of Athlete Liaison Officers appointed to support athletes and officials through the highs and lows of the Olympic experience. Furthermore, the Olympic team is provided with access to an extended network of psychological support and athlete career and education services as part of an additional support to services already offered by the ACE. Finally, the AOC also recognizes the importance of the input of family and friends on the careers of athletes. To create an effective support structure as a fundamental part of an athlete’s ability to compete successfully at an international level, the AOC has created guidelines for family and friends (Shadow-Team, 2012).
4.4.9. Future Sports Policies

While the previous subsections provided an overview of the current sports system, this subsection will zoom in on the changes that are to be made based on newly formed sporting policies.

**Australian Sport – A Pathway to Success**

In 2010 the Australian Government presented a document that describes Australia’s sporting policies for the years to come. This report, as mentioned before, states that the choices in the past have made Australia successful in the global world of sport but is now in need of urgent change. Chapter 2 already mentioned the outlines of the new direction of this pathway to success. This section will further explain each of these points with a bit more depth:

A. Boosting the number of Australian children participating in sport through education:
Participation in sport amongst Australian children has stalled over the last decade and it is thought to be fundamental to increase the number of Australians that participate in sport by building more opportunities for children to participate in sport and physical activity. In order to embed quality sport as physical education in the schools, the Australian Government will deliver a National Sports and Education Strategy.

B. Supporting sports organizations to enhance community participation and social inclusion:
The Australian Government recognises that national and state sports organizations can use sport to assist to build communities through social inclusion for those people who are vulnerable to social and structural disconnection. NSO’s will therefore be supported to expand participation at a community level.

C. Supporting people with disability and athletes with disability: The government aims to improve opportunities for people with disability to participate in sport at the grassroots and high performance levels by creating a partnership with community and NOS’s.

D. Breaking down the barriers to women’s and girls’ participation in sport. Research conducted for the Australian Government has led the government to increase funding and resources to improve media coverage on Australian women’s sport, establish a ‘women in sport’ register to connect sport with potential female board candidates, established Women in Sport Awards to provide support for women in sport, and has requested the ASC to develop strategies with NSO’s tackling issues which affect women’s participation in sport.
E. Breaking down the barriers to Indigenous participation in sport: The Australian Government will use sport to improve results for Indigenous Australians both on and off the sporting field by identifying talent and funding the expansion of talent scouts and programs.

F. Building places to play: In 2007-08, the Australian Government invested roughly 167 million AUD in the sport and recreational infrastructure. Through the Regional and Local Community Infrastructure Program over 1 billion AUD was provided by the Australian Government of which 300 million was provided to support community sport and local clubs. The Building Education Revolution provides world-class educational services, including sports facilities, through a funding of 16.2 billion AUD by the Australian Government. Furthermore, the Australian Sports Foundation works to build community sporting projects through corporate and community donations.

G. Supporting the volunteers and community coaches and officials: Volunteers support almost every part of the sporting system in roles as coaches, officials, team managers, administrators, and board and committee members. These efforts will be supported by:

- Providing additional coaching and officiating training opportunities for up to 45,000 community coaches and officials and subsidising the costs associated with training for 5,000 new community coaches and officials.
- Providing funding support to NSO’s to deliver coaching and officiating education programs, especially in regional areas.
- Providing funding and resources to support mentoring to community coaches and officials.
- Introducing a National Sports Volunteer award program – to reward volunteers and promote their contribution to sport and the wider community.
- Providing additional funding to targeted National Sports Organizations to enable them to employ development staff where required to drive volunteer programs and initiatives through their sport at a grassroots level.
- Delivering a National Sports Volunteer Strategy to better engage, support, train and recognise our sports volunteers. The Strategy will support and contribute to the Government’s National Volunteering Strategy currently being developed in the lead up to 2011, the 10th anniversary of the United Nations International Year of Volunteering.
H. Maximising the contribution of athletes to community sport and participation: Two new initiatives will be implemented to use athletes’ inspirational role they play in communities. First, AIS scholarship-holders will need to volunteer at community sporting clubs or junior sports programs. Secondly, establish resources within the ASC to connect retired and current athletes with charity organizations delivering a range of initiatives that aim to strengthen the community.

I. Talent identification: In addition to the existing NTID program discussed in subsection 4.4.7, the Australian Government expands talent identification and development. This is believed to be the gap between grassroots sport and the next level. Australia though, has a relatively small population compared to sporting rivalry countries. The performance talent pool is estimated at 200,000 people, compared with the US’ 2 million and China’s 20 million. Therefore, the Australian Government will support talent identification by:

- Doubling the national talent identification network
- Funding the expansion of talent scouts and identification programs
- Funding resources to support NSO’s to bridge gaps in their talent development pathways and form links with local sporting clubs and schools.

J. Boosting the development pathway: Opportunities for high performance athletes to compete are a part of the development of athletes. Therefore, the Australian Government will increase funding to expand the number of domestic competitions open to Australian athletes, and double the Local Sporting Champions program to provide financial support to 4,000 more young Australians to compete across Australia.

K. Supporting and retaining high performance coaches and officials: In recent years, there has been a decline in the retention of high performance coaches who are believed to have contributed to the high performance programs and have been central to international sporting success. To support coaches and officials along the grassroots and development pathways, the government will provide:

- A funding boost to enable the retention and support of national head coaches and senior coaches within the Australian sports system.
- Additional funding to NSO’s to offer our top coaches packages which will make it viable to continue coaching in Australia.
- Additional funding to NSO’s to support coaching and officiating initiatives which enable more volunteer coaches and officials to access training and education programs.
• Funding to support the establishment of clear pathways for the development of coaches and officials, as well as emerging coaches and our top officials.

L. Boosting support for international competition. The government believes that Australian athletes can be geographically disadvantaged when it comes to international competition. It also recognizes the growing investment in high performance sport. To ensure a development pathway for aspiring and current world athletes, the Australian government will provide funding to support athletes to attend and participate in more international competitions, and continue to work with the ASC to build the capacity of a European Training Centre.

M. Investing in high performance athletes: In order for the current and future champions to focus on full-time training, preparing for competition and representing the nation, the Australian Government will expand support for elite athletes who ranked in the top 3 in the world, as well as extending support to those ranked in the top 10 in the world. The government will also provide funding to increase payments to the top athletes to ensure they can focus on their daily training.

N. Innovation, research and enhancing the athlete training environment: International competitors have adopted systems and approaches used by the Australian technology departments for sport. To maintain a competitive edge, funding will be expanded for applied research projects that contribute to improved performance by Australian athletes and teams. Availability of sports science support for athletes will also be expanded.

O. Reforming high performance institutions and academies: The AIS and the state and territory institutes and academies of sport remain the backbone of Australia’s high performance system. The system however, is internationally duplicated and lacks coordination and strategic direction. Therefore, the Sport and Recreation Ministers’ Council has agreed to a national approach that will deliver a more aligned, coordinate, and effective sports system. It is believed that the new national operational model for the institutes and academies of sport will improve alignment across the agencies and provide a national high performance strategy.

P. Continue the fight against drugs in sport: Australia has got a 20.1 million AUD ‘National Education and Prevention Action Plan, to keep Australian sport free of illicit drugs. This fight will be continued and forms part of the image of Australian sport.

4.4.10. Track Record

Australia is successful when it comes to competing in sport on an international level. Over the past 20 years, Australia has always ended in the top 10 of the medal tally for competing countries at the Olympics. This run started in 1992 with a tenth place during the Olympic Games of Barcelona. In both 2000 at the Games of Sydney and at the 2004 Games of Athens, Australia ranked fourth (Olympic.org, 2012). At the upcoming 2012 London Olympics, Australia will compete in 35 of the 38 sports disciplines. An estimated 430 athletes will represent Australia in these sports and it is the aim to place within the top five nations on the gold and total medal standings, and win medals in more than 14 sports disciplines to exceed the achievement of the 2008 Australian Team (AOC, 2012).

This concludes this chapter. The following chapter outlines the main findings based on chapters 2 and 4.
5. Findings
This chapter provides a summary of the most important findings of the literature review and research of the previous chapter. These findings are categorized in separate paragraphs and follow the structure of this dissertation. The first section presents the findings on sport in regard to national culture of Australia and the Netherlands. The second section presents findings on historical differences and development of both countries after which the third section shows the differences and similarities between both sports systems. This chapter concludes with a summary list of the findings.

5.1. Sport and Present National Culture
The research above has shown the history and development of the sports system of Australia and the Netherlands but has also displayed the current and future sports policies. Changes to these systems are partially subjective because of national culture. The following findings are in regard to the national cultures of Australia and the Netherlands.

5.1.1. Hofstede’s Cultural Dimensions for Australia and the Netherlands
Both Countries are much alike according to the five cultural dimensions researched by Hofstede. They are very similar on the Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance dimensions. Australia scored PDI 36 and UAI 51, and the Netherlands scored PDI 38 and UAI 53. This implies that power is decentralized, managers are accessible, and communication is informal, direct, and participative. There is also a focus on planning, a preference to maintain rigid codes of belief toward behaviour, and an intolerance towards unorthodox behaviour and ideas. Australia’s attitude is fairly relaxed, and not averse to taking risks. The Dutch however, have an inner urge to work hard and innovation might be resisted.

In terms of Individualism and Long-Term Orientation, both countries are fairly similar. Individualism in Australia scores 90 and is higher than the score of 80 of the Netherlands. The workforce of both countries is very self-reliant and hiring and promotion decisions are based on merit or evidence of what one has done or can do. The Dutch are more long-term oriented with a score of 44 as opposed to Australia’s score of 31. Still both countries are relatively short-term orientated. They strive for quick results and there is a strong social pressure to keep up with the rest. Furthermore, both countries exhibit great respect for traditions and fulfilling social obligations.

The biggest difference between both national cultures lies in the Masculinity/Femininity dimension. With a score of 61, Australia is a masculine society. Behaviour in school, work,
and play are based on shared values that people should strive to be the best they can be, and that the winner takes all. Conflicts are resolved at the individual level and the goal is to win. The Netherlands with a score of 14 however, is considered to be a feminine society, where it is important to keep the life-work balance while making sure that all are involved. Conflicts are resolved by compromise and negotiation (Hofstede, 2012).

5.1.2. Role of Sport in the cultures of Australia and the Netherlands

**Australia:**
Australian sport strives to uphold principles such as fairness, respect, responsibility, and safety. Australians are proud of their sporting ability and reputation of good sport, and the society expects high standards of behaviour from all people involved in sport (ASC, 2012b). Sport has helped to promote Australian symbols, emblems and colours, and have contributed to today’s national consciousness. Sport in Australia might be more deeply and cultural meaningful than in any other country (Cashman, 2003).

**The Netherlands:**
Sport in the Netherlands is a part of the culture and developments in sport are in line with the broader developments of society. Information technologies provide a new dimension through sport, sport has become a way to ‘escape’ day to day business, sport provides a platform for people to still connect and engage with each other in today’s individualistic society, sport emotions have become more informal, sport is growing towards being big business, and sport get more roles and responsibilities in education and integration (SCP, 2008). Sport in the Netherlands is shaped by existing cultural traditions and social influences. This creates a specific Dutch sports culture with its own sporting preferences and characteristic beliefs and discussions about sport (Bottenburg, 2000).

5.2. Historical Differences and Future Directions

The main research of the literature review shows that the history of the Australian and Dutch culture is very different and that both sports systems developed in their own way. Differences include the early integration of sport into Australia’s culture and the professionalization of sport. These and other findings on historical differences and policies on future directions are presented in the following subsections.

5.2.1. Embedment of sport in Australia’s culture

Australia’s global image is defined by sport and has a tradition of sports participation and takes sport seriously. Its cultural and sporting history derives from former colonial ties and
reminders of the British Empire. The sporting values and preferences of these British settlers shaped the practices of sport in Australia and affected the nation’s desire for sporting success (Green, 2007). Sport is cultural institution and contributes to the vitality, vibrancy and international profile of a nation. The followers of Australian sport use their sport to construct a sense of both personal and national identity. During the pioneering period, Australia adopted a huge pride in sporting abilities, one that is still evident in Australian society today (Stewart, et al., 2004). When Australia’s social, cultural and physical landscape was in its formative stage sport played a prominent role and it was the games cult that deeply influenced Australian society (Cashman, 2012).

5.2.2. Professionalization of Australia’s sports system
Since the late 1970s, the Australian sports system evolved into a more commercialized, corporate and professional model with a formal and direct control approach and increased funding. With institutions like the AIS, 85-90 per cent of funding, and management of sport by the government was primarily directed towards elite sports (Cashman, 2012). Professor Bloomfield however, recommended increasing participation and sports activities by Australians (Bloomfield, 2003). This was supported by the Crawford Report in 2009. Based on these findings, the Australian Government released a report on the future for Australian Sport. The traditional sporting systems focused on delivering high sporting success and with that established the nation’s identity, culture and international sporting reputation. The new approach is about developing a collaborative, efficient and integrated national sports system with a focus on sports participation by the community as well as the high performance system (Australian-Government, 2010).

5.2.3. Sport and culture in the Netherlands
The early form of the Netherlands became a superpower in Europe in the 17th century. Dutch ships roamed the world and business was conducted all over. The modern-day Dutch state was formed in the late 18th and early 19th century. After the Second World War, the Dutch society changed and a welfare state ensured a radical rise in the standard of living. Politics moved strongly towards democratisation. With strong ties to formal colonies and an everlasting increasing immigration, the Dutch society is highly multicultural (Oostrom, 2008). The term ‘sport’ wasn’t commonly used in the Netherlands until the late 1870s (Bottenburg, 1998). Since then sport has started to play an ever more important role in the Dutch culture. Sports historical research shows that sport is derived from a variety of activities with useful objectives and a display of skill and therefore is part of the cultural process (Bottenburg, 1998). Dutch sport manifests itself in many ways with recreational, performance, and
numerous other motives. Sport has professionalized and the meaning of sport for society has changed and has become more diverse. In the Netherlands the development of sport was shaped by existing cultural traditions and social influences. This created a specific Dutch sports culture with its own sporting preferences and characteristic beliefs and discussions about sport (Bottenburg, 2000).

5.2.4. The future of the sports system of the Netherlands
The Netherlands have an ambition to organize the Olympic Games of 2028. As part of these plans they have formulated a top 10 goal. It states that The Netherlands wants to reach a position structurally within the top 10 competing countries at the Olympic Games. In order to reach this ambition the Dutch Olympic Committee selected eight areas of focus for elite sports success. Policies have been constructed on each of these areas and are now been put into place. It is important to recognize that this is only part of the complete sports system and that there is an everlasting focus on sports participation and grassroots sports as well. With the Sport Agenda 2016 however, the Netherlands now starts with a serious focus on performance and success that should contribute to this top 10 ambition.

5.2.5. Allocation of the Olympic Games
The Olympic Games provide an opportunity for politicians and industry to advance the improvement of infrastructure of sport, housing, communication, traffic and other sectors. There are also a number of political, ecological, cultural and social issues related to the Games. The Olympics have grown in cost and revenue but have no important economic dimension in relation to national accounts. Essentially, the Olympic Games have welcomed (economic) effects but also have limitations (Andreff & Szymanski, 2006). When Sydney was awarded the 2000 Olympics, culture played an important role in the electoral procedure because Australia was regarded as a safe haven. Success in international sport is regarded as evidence of the successful development of Australian Society.

5.2.6. Focus on achievement
In order to prepare Australian athletes for the Sydney 2000 Olympic and Paralympic Games the Olympic Athlete Program (OAP) was created. Its objective was involvement through achievement. Most of the government funding for sport went to this OAP in order to maximize success during the Olympics (Australian-Sport-Commission, 1994). Due to this high focus on elite sports and elite sports programs however, the objective to increase physical activity amongst Australians has not been met (Hogan & Norton, 2000).
5.3. Similarities and Differences in Sports Systems

Findings so far have shown the history and development of the sports systems of Australia and the Netherlands. Today both countries have their own sports system with their own successes. The Dutch Government has now chosen a path towards an Olympic ambition and formed a policy with eight areas of focus. These areas have been researched in the previous chapter for both countries. These are the similarities and differences in the existing sports systems and future sports policies.

5.3.1. Elite Sports Infrastructure

Similarities: Both countries have a national Olympic Committee that is highly involved in the sports infrastructure. Both countries also have training centres where training, education and housing for athletes is combined with access to experts, coaches and other facilities. Both infrastructures also have a strong focus on assisting and identifying talent.

Differences: The main differences are the number of training centres and the expertise of the training centres. The Netherlands have four main training centres and each of them has their own expertise. Australia has one central training centre, the AIS, and eight state and territory training centres and all of them provide a complete package of expertise. Australia also has access to the European Training Centre for their overseas athletes. Another important difference is that the training centres, support structure, and talent identification in the Netherlands are much more recent and to some extent have been adopted from the Australian sports system.

5.3.2. Elite Sports Programs

Similarities: Australia and the Netherlands both have nationwide elite sports programs that are executed by the national training centres.

Differences: In the Netherlands, each National Sports Organization is initially responsible for creating their own elite sports program. This results in about 200 different programs throughout the country. The main provider of elite sports programs in Australia however, is the AIS with its dependencies across the nation. In addition to that, the Athlete Career and Education program provides services that assist athletes to undertake education, vocation, personal development opportunities during their active careers and in preparation of their post athlete careers. Furthermore, there are 45 Elite Athlete Friendly Universities in Australia for the athletes that can’t apply for the AIS sports programs.
5.3.3. Elite Sports Funding
Similarities: The only main similarity is that both governments provide part of the sports funding.
Differences: The Netherlands receive funding from three parties: The Department of Health, Welfare, and Sports, the LOTTO, and Partners and Suppliers of NOC*NSF with a total of roughly 62.9 million AUD a year. Australia’s elite sports receive roughly 220 million AUS per year through mostly the Australian Government and AOC.

5.3.4. Professional Guidance
Similarities: Both countries acknowledge the importance of professional guidance of their athletes and have made plans to further strengthen this part of the sports system.
Differences: The Netherlands have invested in 20 fulltime technical directors to further professionalize the elite sports organizations and National Sports Organizations. Australia mainly invests in recruiting, training, rewarding, and retention of high performance and community coaches.

5.3.5. Position of the Elite Athlete
Similarities: Both Olympic committees play a role in the selection process of elite athletes. Funding or access to elite sports programs is available after selection.
Differences: The Netherlands have a clear definition of which athletes are considered to be elite athletes. These athletes can benefit from the elite athlete programs and funding. In Australia the funding is mostly provided through scholarships and is overseen by the Athletes Commission from the AIS. A separate category is the Olympic Team, which is selected by a three step process involving the International Federation Qualification System, nomination under the National Federation criteria, and selection by the AOC. This process is also overseen by the Athlete Commission.

5.3.6. Position of the Coach and Specific Experts
Similarities: Elite athletes in both countries have access to professional coaches and knowledge of experts in numerous fields of science.
Differences: The Netherlands invests in several ways in the development and education of their coaches and has developed a network of experts that play a crucial role in the development of elite sports programs and elite athletes. Australia has decentralized this support much more by making these services available at every AIS department.
5.3.7. Talent development

Similarities: Both countries recognize the importance of talent development and talent identification. The number of talents available in each of the countries is similar because of the likeness in population size.

Differences: Australia has centralized their talent identification through the NTID and has formed a network together is National Sports Organizations, universities and the Academies of Sport. The Netherlands have assigned the National Sports Federations to develop their own talent programs under the same guidelines. The Netherlands have also developed a talent program that aims to identify talent and commit them to a lifetime of sport.

5.3.8. Scientific Support

Similarities: Australia as well as the Netherlands has a network of experts and scientific support in the same field of expertise.

5.3.9. Other Areas

Other areas where Australia and the Netherlands differ are the role of elite sports within education and support of the Olympic team. Australia has developed several programs in the department of education to involve children in the Olympic movement. It starts with programs that run at elementary schools to programs in universities. The Netherlands have programs that involve sport at these levels however; they do not have specific programs that endorse the Olympic movement. Furthermore, the AOC makes an additional effort to guide their Olympic team by using a team of professionals, councillors, and family members.

5.3.10. Future Sports Policies

The eight areas of focus written by NOC*NSF and supported by the Dutch Government are part of the future sports policies of the Netherlands. What stands out is that this part of the policy is written for the elite athlete sports system, elite athletes, and elite athlete programs. At the same time the aim is to ‘raise’ the whole Netherlands to an Olympic level which is supported by all the main umbrella sporting policies. Furthermore, the Netherlands create partnerships in order to use what is already available, and centralize facilities to be more efficient. If compared with the future sports policy of Australia ‘A Pathway to Success’ it is apparent that Australia focuses much more on centralization of all levels of the sports system. Australia also expands existing sports programs and invests in creating more sports specific experts, facilities, and scientific support.
### 5.3.11. Table of Similarities and Differences in Sports Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Similarities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.3.1.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.1.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- High involvement Olympic Committee</td>
<td>- Amount of National Training Centres</td>
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<td>- National Training Centres</td>
<td>- More recent in the Netherlands</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.2.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.2.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Presence nationwide programs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Elite Friendly Universities in Australia</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.3.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.3.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Mainly funded by the Government</td>
<td>- Larger funds available in Australia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- 62.9 vs. 220 million AUD</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.4.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.4.</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>- Professionalize NSO’s in NL</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Focused on coaches in Australia</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.5.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.5.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Fund available when selected as an elite athlete</td>
<td>- More ways to receive funds in Australia</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.6.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.6.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Both use Coaches and Experts</td>
<td>- Centralized use in the Netherlands</td>
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<td>- Decentralized at departments of AIS</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.7.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Recognize the importance</td>
<td>- Decentralized through NSO’s in NL</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Start as early as possible</td>
<td>- Centralized at NTDI in Australia</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.8.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.8.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Fields of scientific support</td>
<td>- Decentralized in the Netherlands</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Centralized in Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>5.3.9.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.9.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Education and support Olympic team in Australia</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Central network in the Netherlands</td>
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<td><strong>5.3.10.</strong></td>
<td><strong>5.3.10.</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Holistic approach</td>
<td>- Australia starts balancing the system</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Focus on performance starts now in the Netherlands</td>
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5.4. Summary of Findings

This section provides a summary of the findings from this chapter. These findings will be discussed in the next chapter. The main findings of this dissertation are:

- The eight areas of focus of the Dutch top 10 ambition researched within the Dutch and Australian sports systems show quite a few similarities in sports infrastructure, sports programs and support of coaches and other experts. Differences are mainly found in the professional support of the Olympic team, future sports policies, talent development, position of the elite athletes, funding and scale of elite sports programs, and the centralized versus decentralized organization of facilities and infrastructure.

- Australia and the Netherlands have similar national cultures according to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions. However the biggest difference is that Australia is considered to be a masculine society, whilst the Netherlands is considered to be a feminine society.

- Sport was early embedded in Australia’s culture and deeply influenced Australian society.

- Sport is used in Australia to construct both personal and national identity.

- Professionalization of the Australian sports system focused primarily on elite sports and elite sports programs.

- Sport in Australia might be more deeply and culturally meaningful than in any other country.

- High focus on elite sports and elite sports programs conflicted with the ASC’s objective to raise sports participation amongst Australian citizens.

- New policies strive to raise Australia’s participation rates in sport as well as high performance.

- Sport in the Netherlands are part of the culture and developments in sport are in line with the broader developments of society.

- The Netherlands formulated an ambition to ‘raise’ the whole country to Olympic level with the eventual result of hosting the 2028 Olympics.

- Separate sports policies for elite sports in the Netherlands emerged later than in Australia.

- Focus on performance of elite sports in the Netherlands starts with the Sport Agenda 2016.

- The Netherlands and Australia are similar when it comes to: participation rates over the last years, population size and growth over the last 30 years, and GDP per capita in the last 10-15 years.

These findings will now be discussed in the following chapter through a synthesis with the literature that was researched in this dissertation.
6. Discussion

This chapter discusses the findings of this research through a synthesis with the literature. The aim of this discussion is to interpret and evaluate the results of the research and focuses on links between the results and the research questions where this research started with. The first part of the discussion answers these questions. In the following parts, it ties the findings of previous research, explains the limitations of this research, and discusses the relevance. This chapter concludes with future research that could be conducted based on this research.

6.1. Main Research Questions

What are the key success factors in the Australian sports system?

The base for the Australian successful sports system was founded by successive Australian Governments from the late 1970s onwards (Cashman, 2012). It was Australia’s worst performance in the history of the modern Olympics at the 1976 Montreal Games (Olympic.org, 2012) that led to this change. The sports system changed dramatically into a commercialized, corporate and professional model and Australia climbed back in the top 10 ranking of the Olympic medal table during the 1992 Olympics of Barcelona and ranked within this top 10 ever since. The Federal Government however, spent 85-90 per cent of the funding on elite levels of sport rather than community sport (Cashman, 2012). This approach seems to have paid off in terms of elite sport success because Australia is one of the world’s most successful sporting countries and has a global sports image (Stewart, et al., 2004). It can therefore be argued that the changes that were made from the late 1970s onwards, made an important contribution to these successes. The most important changes included a more formal and direct control approach and increased funding. As a result, the Australian Institute of Sport was founded and the Australian Sport Commission began to oversee the functions of the AIS, funded National Sports Organizations, and developed elite and community recreation and participation programs. As Crawford (2009) discussed, Australia’s sports system achieved successes through the way sport was administered post the 1976 Olympics, but also recognizes that there is a need for change in order to enable all Australians to participate in sport and also improve the health and wellbeing of Australia’s population. In a way it can be argued that Australia has focused primarily on elite sports and achieving international success and has somewhat neglected other areas of the sports system. This is supported by Green (2007) who argues that it is questionable whether the ASC and AIS ever found a balance between their two main objectives towards mass participation and elite sports. Hogan & Norton (2000) in their work ‘The Price of Olympic Gold’ even state that the objective of mass participation has not been met according to data.
on physical patterns. Recent news revealed that Australia’s population is amongst one of the most obese in the world. This study is not the place to discuss whether or not this has to do with not reaching the objective of mass participation. It remains an unanswered question however, how one of the most successful sporting countries in the world also has such an obese population. The demand for change has been recognized by the Australian Government and has set out a new pathway to success in 2010. The biggest changes include focus on all levels of sport, increased support for sports participation in schools and communities, and increased funding for volunteers, coaches and talents. At the same time, Australia’s Government still recognizes the importance of elite sports and increased its funding for the ASC to roughly 325 million AUD per year, of which 220 million AUD was available to elite sports in 2011 (Australian-Government, 2010).

Because this new approach has only been in effect over the last two years and there have been no Olympics since, it is hard to say if this approach is as successful as the previous. However, based on this research and the past achievements the following key success factors are identified:

- The central control and oversight of the Australian Sports Commission
- The Australian Institute of Sport with its partner State and Regional Institutes and the Academies of Sport
- The support of the Australian Olympic Committee in every state and territory
- The central control of the AIS over 700 scholarships per year in 35 disciplines of sport
- Elite Athlete Friendly University programs for other scholarships
- The ongoing large funding by the Australian Government into sport
- The centralized professional guidance and centralized scientific support for athletes
- Support by the Athletes Commission
- Creating Olympic involvement of children at schools
- The Team Behind the Team to lead and guide the current Olympic Team in preparation and participation of Olympic Games

In what ways could these success factors benefit the Dutch Olympic top 10 ambition? The world of sport is evolving and every country is constantly in search of the competitive edge. It is not necessarily the case that one country just copies another country’s sports system. When the Dutch sports system and the Olympic top 10 ambition are studied however, it is apparent that there are similarities to the Australian past and future sports system. This may come as no surprise because the business of sport is a globalized one and everyone can study the successes of other countries. Even when it comes down to the
success factors of Australia’s sports system, there are similarities found in the Dutch sports system. For example, the Netherlands have also got institutions for sport throughout the country where athletes can train, live, and receive education. More similarities are found in scientific support, support and training of coaches, and involvement of an Olympic Committee (NOC*NSF, 2012b). In 2006 a delegation of 23 people from the Dutch sports industry went on a trip to study the Australian sports system. The research they performed was then used to develop Dutch sports policies and the sports system. That is why these similarities now exist.

The main differences however, are identified in the decentralized use of elite sports programs, scientific support, and coaches. The biggest difference is the size of the funding. With 62.9 million AUD a year available for elite athletes it comes nowhere near to Australia’s 220 million AUD per year (Australian-Government, 2010). The Dutch Olympic top 10 ambition could benefit from Australia’s success factors by organizing sports programs by:

- Increasing sports funding
- Centralizing sports programs
- Centralizing scientific support and coaches
- Creating Athlete Friendly Universities with related sports programs
- Developing a team around the Olympic Team
- Creating sports programs on schools

The question remains however, if these alterations would work for the Netherlands. Most of them would require significantly higher funding. It is questionable whether the Dutch Government would support this funding. Funding can depend on the GDP per capita of a country, but figures have shown similar GDP’s and GDP growth per capita for Australia and the Netherlands (IndexMundi, 2012a, 2012b). The Dutch Government and Olympic Committee designates the Dutch GDP per capita as a strong one (NOC*NSF, 2012b). As part of an international research called ‘More Money in More Medals Out’, NOC*NSF (2012) recognizes a direct relation between funding and Olympic medal. Yet even with this knowledge, the Dutch Government has chosen to not increase further funding of the sports system. It can be argued that this is partially due to politics. In the Netherlands it depends on which political party is in power how much support there is for sport. In Australia however, sport is one of the main priorities of every political agenda. So even though the Olympic ambition is supported by the Dutch Government, it does not necessarily result in a massive increase of funding. Instead, NOC*NSF (2012), describes how they will invest in creating a larger network of experts and scientific support that can be used for a high variety of athletes and sports programs. The small size of the Netherlands allows for a lot of the support
structure to be decentralized. This system could however, limit supply and expert knowledge for specific support or athletes.

As part of the Olympic Plan for 2028, the Netherlands have commenced a phase in which they want to ‘raise’ the whole country to an Olympic level. This is once more mentioned in the Dutch Olympic top 10 Ambition. If this ambition is studied however, it can’t be ignored that the focus is on elite sports, elite athletes, elite programs, and so on. As this is only part of the entire sports system, it is not said that other levels of sport are ignored. It is quite the opposite in the Netherlands. There has always been and there still is a focus on all levels of sport. This holistic approach is now recognized in the sporting policies of Australia as well. In Australia however, there is a more centralistic approach through all levels of sport, whereas in the Netherlands grassroots sports is still mainly decentralized. The 'limited' funding for elite sports in the Netherlands might implicate that they cannot compete with countries like Australia. The focus on achievements however, starts now and it future will tell whether or not the Dutch approach brings them the desired results. Moreover, too much focus on elite sports alone might cost even more down the road when obesity rates grow due to a lack of focus on grassroots sports and participation rates.

6.2. Secondary Research Questions

How does national culture impact sport in Australia compared to the Netherlands?

And,

What is the link between culture and Australia’s sporting success?

Culture has played a different role in the rise and development of sport in Australia and the Netherlands. It can even be argued that culture in Australia was even formed by sport, rather than the other way around. Stewart et al (2004), state that the sporting values and preferences of the British settlers shaped the cultural practices of sport and affected the nation’s desire for sporting success. Sport also played a prominent role when Australia’s social, cultural and physical landscape was in its formative stage and the games cult deeply influenced Australian society (Cashman, 2012).Green (2007) adds that sport is a cultural institution and contributes to the vitality, vibrancy and international profile of the nation. Sport has played an important social and cultural role in Australia, providing a form of social cement which connects communities. Sport has helped to promote Australian symbols, emblems and colours, based on Australia’s flora and fauna, and have contributed to today’s national consciousness. Sport in Australia might be more deeply and cultural meaningful than in any other country (Cashman, 2003). In the Netherlands however, the sport wasn’t introduced until after the modern Dutch state was formed (Oostrom, 2008). In 1938 sport was
described as a game that demands seriousness and therefore takes place outside of the cultural process (Huizinga, 2010). This is refuted these days as sport’s historical research shows that sport doesn’t come forth from ‘play’ but that sport is derived from a variety of activities with useful objectives and a display of skill and therefore is part of the cultural process (Bottenburg, 1998). This is further supported by Bottenburg (2000) in an exploration of the social history of sport in the Netherlands. Sport in the Netherlands was shaped by existing cultural traditions and external social influences. This created a specific Dutch sports culture with its own sporting preferences and characteristic beliefs and discussions about sport (Bottenburg, 2000). One of these discussions has always been between the forming and performing value of sport. This illustrates, that sport to this date plays a very different role within the cultural dimensions of both countries. This is also reflected in the National Cultural Dimensions by Hofstede (2012). The biggest difference in these dimensions is that Australia is considered a masculine society and the Netherlands a feminine society. This cultural dimension impacts sport in a way that Australians strive for the best they can be and that the winner takes all. Australians are proud of their successes and achievements in school, work, and sport. Due to these differences is can be argued that Australia’s global successes in sport can be linked to the role of sport within their culture. As discussed in the previous paragraph, it is evident that Australia’s sports system resulted in great achievements. This sports system however, has only been in place since the late 1970s and Australia has achieved many successes in sport before that as well. Even more so, it can be said that the sports system developed because of the role of sport within the national culture of Australia.

When Gladwell (2008) wrote about how cultural and historical backgrounds may provide explanation for the success of people and generations, he also explained how culture influences the math skills of Chinese children and the high performance of Chinese athletes in precision sports such as table tennis. His findings can be related to the history of the Dutch and Australian cultures and conservative inferences can be made. Australia started out as a penal colony and this influenced their culture and with it their sports system. In the early days it was survival of the fittest. As an outpost of the British Empire the new settlers had something to prove. Because sport was part of culture so early on, it became a way to separate you from the rest, but also a way to escape everyday life. Even more so, through sport convicts could measure themselves against the homeland and prove themselves to be better at their ‘own’ game. This does not only relate to sport. It is part of the identity of the Australian culture to be better than the rest in every way. In a similar way sport in the Netherlands has been influenced by its history and culture. An important part of the Dutch
history is the Dutch East India Company between 1602 and 1796. At its peak they had over 4,700 trading ships traded over 2.5 million tons of goods in Asia. Its nearest rival was the English East India Company with almost 2,700 ships and only one-fifth of the trade (VOC, 2012). In order to become so successful, the company needed to be adventurous and fearless. In today’s sport this is reflected by the way the Dutch play. Dutch soccer for example is known around the world for its attacking play style and it not only reflects in soccer. Another important influence is the ever present fight against the rising water. With most of the country beneath sea level, the Dutch have learned over centuries to work together against threats. In sport this is reflected by a high value of teamwork. Everyone gets to participate and joining is more important than winning. Although, these arguments are not fully researched, it is questionable whether or not the Dutch will ever be culturally eager enough to achieve great sporting successes.

These differences suggest that culture influences sports and vice versa. For both countries it can be said that culture is deeply rooted through its history. This implies that culture is not going to change significantly over a short period of time, if at all. You could question therefore, if a sports system can truly be changed. It is very likely that Australia will always have a cultural obligation to focus on performance and be the best, whilst the Netherlands discusses the best approach to include everyone.

*In what extent can Australia’s success factors of its sports system be implemented in the Netherlands in regard to national culture?*

If the Netherlands were to copy Australia’s success factors, it is evident that there is a need for a lot more funding. Considering national culture however, there would be very few reasons why these success factors could not be implemented. On the contrary, implementation of these factors should be possible according to a comparison of both national cultures. Hofstede (2012), shows that both countries are very much alike in most dimensions. Where they differ in masculinity and femininity influences relate mainly to ambition for performance and how conflicts are resolved. Wursten (2012) however, does show that Australia and the Netherlands belong to different cultural clusters and this should be taken into consideration. The key to change for the Netherlands as part of the Network Cluster is defining shared interest. There exists a reluctance to believe that leaders or managers can define what is good for the organization from ‘higher positions’. Yet, if there is too much focus on only the high performance levels of sport, resistance can be expected based on the national culture dimensions. This significant difference between both national cultures has perhaps the biggest implications on the Dutch sports system. As research has
shown the Dutch like to discuss and compromise. This reflects for example in the way sport policies are made. All National Sports Organizations have (as members of NOC*NSF) a say when new policies are made. This makes policy making a relatively slow process and quite possibly will never be as centralized and unambiguous as Australia’s sports policies. The everlasting discussion prohibits a true choice for one direction but always seeks the compromise. This perhaps suits the holistic approach of the Netherlands but will it lead to achieving their top 10 ambitions? Australia’s successes might suggest that a heavier emphasis on elite sports is required to be successful.

6.3. Limitations
In general this study has some acknowledged limitations. The research has been done abroad, which made it difficult to find Dutch literature on for example the history of sport in the Netherlands. Another limitation was the size of Australia, which made it difficult to gain (physical) access to the sports networks and sports institutes. Furthermore, this dissertation focused mainly on the elite sports systems of both countries and therefore implications cannot be made for the entire sports system. This dissertation has also not discussed other influences on the sports system, such as the environment and climate. The mere size of Australia allows for more sporting facilities and the climate is much more suitable for outdoor sports than in the Netherlands.

6.4. Relevance
The outcomes of this dissertation may provide useful insights for the Dutch sport policy makers in their ambition to further develop the nation’s sports system and raise it to a higher Olympic level. This dissertation is also relevant to the profession of a (future) sports manager in the Netherlands who wants to have a further understanding of the global world of sport. Furthermore, this research could be relevant to students and academics who simply want to know more about the topics that are discussed in this study.

6.5. Future Research
The findings of this dissertation can be used in future research to explore the other areas of a sports system: grassroots or amateur sports, commercial sports, and school sports. They can also be used as starting point for further exploration of other influences on sports systems than culture. This can create a greater understanding of the influences on sport and sports systems. This understanding can be of importance in developing the sports system or creating new sporting policies.
7. Conclusion and Recommendations

Conclusion:
Having researched the elite national sports systems of Australia and the Netherlands, it can be concluded that both countries have well established sporting systems and share similarities in population size, sports participation rates, cultural dimensions and GDP per capita, but differ in sports successes. The sporting successes of Australia in the last 30 years can mainly be contributed to the sports system. This sports system however, developed through national culture and it was sport that deeply influenced the evolution of Australia’s national culture. Sport in the Netherlands has developed in a very different way and played a different part in the culture. Findings have also shown relations between cultural and historical backgrounds, and the success of people or generations, and may even explain sporting succes. Eventhough, Australia has achieved global sports successes and is recognized as one of the most successful sporting countries in the world, it is time to change the sports system. Focus shifts towards a balance of the entire sports system, rather than the elite level alone. At the same time, the Netherlands are on a path towards organizing the Olympics of 2028. Part of this path is the ambition to rank among the top 10 countries of the world during every Olympic Games. This ambition has set out new policies and restructures the sports system. Similarities and differences are found in this sports system with Australia’s system. The Netherlands have a solid sports system it however, it is evident that the biggest difference is the scale and funding of both sports systems. Furthermore, the Netherlands increases focus on the elite sports system in a time where Australia increases focus on mass participation and grassroots sports. Both countries however, display a balance of the entire system. If the Netherlands wishes to achieve the ambitions formulated in their Olympic plans they must be competitive in the global world of sport and it is therefore advisable to significantly increase sports funding as support for the elite sports system.

Recommendations:
These recommendations are directed to benefit the Dutch Olympic top 10 Ambition:

- Increase funding for the elite sports system considerably
- Centralize elite sports programs
- Centralize scientific support and coaches
- Establish Elite Athlete Friendly Universities
- Create an ‘Olympic Movement’ in all levels of education to influence the national culture and attitude for future success
- Create a support structure for elite athletes similar to the support Australia provides
- Create larger support throughout all levels of politics
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