

**Developing Youth Football Academies in Greece:
Managing Issues and Challenges**

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Abstract

Present study firstly investigated the goals and objectives of youth football academies in Greece, according to the different sector that they operate (public, private, voluntary) and secondly created proposals for future youth football academies development. Research was conducted in Greece, at the period of 2010-2011. Fourteen youth football academies participated in this study and divided into three categories (five academies in commercial sector, four academies in public sector, and five academies in voluntary sector). Goals and objectives in each youth football academy were recorded in three different theoretical areas: a) administrative, b) coaching, and c) supportive services. Data were collected through interviews via open and closed question formats from fourteen administrative and fourteen coaching staff of the corresponding teams. Qualitative analysis was applied. The results of the study indicated significant differences in operation of youth football academies according to the different sector they operated: a) the commercial sector academies attempted to improve rapidly the technical skills of child footballers, using their good facilities / services, b) the public sector academies aimed primarily to improve the number of children, and c) the voluntary sector academies aimed mainly to identify footballers talent and excellent skills. The above results, conducted the following proposals for the overall development of youth football academies in Greece: a) a new management philosophy should require to adopted by football stakeholders, b) scientific methods of training and cooperation with scientific institutions should be applied, and c) any action should be taken in mind the recent economic crisis in Greece. In conclusion, youth football academies in the region of Thessaly _ in which this study was conducted_ could be under development if new management strategies be adopted by football shareholders.

Keywords: youth football academies; management; coaching; Greece

Developing Youth Football Academies in Greece: Managing Issues and Challenges

Introduction

Football is the most popular sport worldwide. Football is played by men, women, and children with different levels of specialization (Torkildsen, 1998). Studies have repeatedly shown that participation in sports, outdoor recreation activities and other youth sports are important during early child's development (Buonamano, Cei, & Mussino, 1995; Mull, Bayless, & Jamieson, 1997). There are still groups of children worldwide and youths who are not participating in sports. Sport extracurricular activities contribute to a child's positive development: socially, physically, and mentally (Mull et al., 1997).

Among many adequate recreation activities, youth football academies as sport organizations, strive to improve the technical skills, the physical abilities, and children's character. The need to understand the young athletes' psychological characteristics is a considerable extent that has great impact on their performance and their future development (Buonamano et al., 1995; Stewart & Meyers, 2004).

Experts in football believe that factors which mainly effect football is the result of component functions which include physical abilities, soccer skills and psychological and cognitive factors (Hiddink, 2001). The excellent performance in football is a consequence of individual's psychological / social factors, technical and tactical skills and physical abilities (Bangsbo, 1994; Jones & Drust, 2007). Every football training program should include all the above factors, although training programs focus more often in the development of tactical / technical and physical abilities of players (Reilly, 2005).

Football as a sport attracts the interest of researchers, as they investigated factors affecting the sport performance of the football players (Hammami et al., 2013; Malina et al., 2007; Vanttinen, Blomqvist, & Häkkinen, 2010), the motives for football participation (Gürbüz, Altintas, & Asci, 2007; White, Duda, & Keller, 1998; Yun, 2005), the motives of fans to travel in big football events (Hoye & Lillis, 2008; Neale & Funk, 2006), football injuries (Rontoyannis, Stalikas, Sarros & Vlastaris, 1998) etc.

The present study investigated the goals, objectives and management philosophies of youth football academies in Greece, according to the sector that they operate (public, private, voluntary) during last decade. Furthermore, there were

suggested strategies to increase: the number of youth football players, the efficacy of academies management/coaching and the further development of football as a youth sport in Greece.

Football in Greece

In Greece football generally is accepted as a sport for entertainment, but also as a sport with active participation is an integral part of life for millions Greeks. The successes of national football teams strengthen the national effort for the development of football as a national sport in Greece. National football teams won Men's European Championship 2004 in Portugal, took the second position in Youth European Championship in 2006 and 2012, were qualified in the finals of European Championship in 2008 (Austria - Switzerland) and 2012 (Poland - Ukraine), were also qualified in 2010 World Cup held in South Africa and took the 2nd place in their group which gave them the qualification for the finals of 2014 World Cup in Brazil. National football teams were qualified in the recent twelve years in three European Championships (Euro) and two World Championships (Mountial). It should be noted that the National football team of men in the year 2012-13, managed to get the maximum degrees and had the largest increase in the specific rating of FIFA, and thus managed to enter in the top 10 of European national teams (7th place) and took a place in the elite of international football. After these successes the interest of the people and especially of small children in football was multiplied. The plan of the Greek Football Association was the systematic discovery, selection and exploitation of youth talents in order to create future European, World and Olympic champions (Greek Football Federation, 2013) promoted the development children's program "football for all" in elementary and gymnasium Greek schools. As a result after three years, the number of youth football academies increased in many places of Greece. Practice developing such a system has multiple benefits both in the economic and in social fields of the country. In a recent economic study, the Greek Financial Research Institute refereed that sports contributed 1.6% to Gross Domestic Product. Football has the most massive participation from all the other sports in Greece with a number of 200.000 registered athletes, 4.000 clubs and millions fans. Identifying, recording, and monitoring football talents, helped to grow up public, private and voluntary youth football academies. The creating nurseries of young talented players toward the international standards of major European football teams will help the precise identification and the successful promotion of these football talents. The targeting of the

whole effort must be the improving of football sport image in Greece and strengthen the national economy.

A highly popular recreation activity in Greece is considered to be Mini football. Mini football is well known internationally as 5X5-football. It was presented in America decades ago, where teams with fewer than the normal members, played "football" in grounds of basketball. In Greece football in playgrounds of small dimensions 5X5 made his appearance from 1995 and nowadays this sport recreation activity is very popular. At the last ten-year period mini football presented rapid growth primarily in urban centers of Greece. Mini football has acquired a lot of fans as it is easy to be played from a big mass of individuals, it is relatively low cost, it is not addressed only in individuals that have played in the old days football but also in individuals that they like to participate in activities that offer exercise, entertainment and amusement. Participant's practice their skills, develop their fitness abilities and enjoy the company with other fans (Kouthouris et al., 2010).

The International youth football academies paradigm

It is accepted that one of the more valuable internationally youth football academy is expressing by the Manchester United youth football team (Cooper, 2007). The philosophy of Manchester United Academy is to take youth development at grass roots to a higher level, using the four versus four projects. Playing four versus four is not a new concept. The Dutch have been playing it since the mid of 1980's. The godfather of football in Holland, the great, late Rinus Michels said: "Good coaches use the basic criteria of street football for their vision of grass roots development; they realize that these elements produce a natural process which gives the most efficient training for young kids". More particularly, philosophy's scheme was to recreate, as much as possible, a match day environment that was more child and player-centered.

This guiding concept led the developers of the scheme to reflect upon football environments where the young players were free to learn, practice and develop their football skills without being shackled by the imposed structures, expectations, attentions and scrutiny of significant others. The environments which were considered to provide these qualities the most were the playgrounds, parks, streets, back alleyways, beaches and barrios around the world - areas where the world's greatest players first learned their skills.

Sport Provision and Social Administration

The provision of sports facilities and opportunities in Greece is the result of the interaction between the public, private and voluntary sectors. All of these sectors provide different, yet when looked at closely, similar services in sport and recreation issues (Trihalis, Papanicolaou, Soulas, & Gerodimos, 2007).

Public sectors are defined as “institutions funded by money collected from the public in the form of direct or indirect taxes - community charges, income tax, business taxes, VAT on spending”. Public sectors provide facilities and opportunities for the public, but it is subsidizing by the local government. The local government/authorities aid them with funds, usually a grant, which is their budget for the year. This grant has to include all aspects of running the sport facilities i.e. heating, wages and maintenance. Their aim is even the break rather than the profit. The facilities in public sectors usually come at a cheaper price than private sectors as their market is everyone of all ages and therefore their facilities are not as highly maintained as they would be in private sectors. Examples of public sectors are Local Authorities Leisure and Sport Services (Crompton, 2000).

Private sector sports facilities are provided by individuals or a partnership and are usually ran by a consortium (Daft, 1997). These individuals (or companies) invest their own money into the facilities. The newest and most upcoming form of private sector companies within sport is football clubs. Football clubs are now big money investments that could be much more successful businesses (Papanicolaou, 2004). The influence of Roman Abramovich is just one example. The private sector provides sports facilities for two main reasons: a) to make a return on their investment for themselves and their shareholders, and b) to make a profit out of sport. Private sector companies like to ensure that all customers' needs are met. The areas that involved private sectors are the follows: a) Active sports - tennis, golf, health and fitness suites, snooker and pool and water sports, b) Spectator sports - stadiums for football, rugby, tennis, cricket and golf. Football is by far the most popular spectator sport, c) Sponsorship. The role of the private sector can be well summarized the quote listed below by George Torkildsen (1998): “The major difference between the commercial operator and the public or voluntary operator is the *raison d'être* of the business, the primary objective of the commercial operator being that of financial profit or adequate return on investment”.

The voluntary sector is defined as “inclusive and exclusive clubs that operate as non-profit making organizations and which are essentially managed by and for amateur

sportsmen and women" (Trihalis et al., 2007). The voluntary sector has the largest participation in sport in Greece, most noticeably in competitive sport (Trihalis et al., 2007). The majority of amateur clubs are voluntary run. For example not only are the managers and coaches voluntary but so are the whole playing squad. Each individual within the club gives up their spare time to help run the team, for no pay. Voluntary sector clubs often work in partnership with the private or public sector (e.g. they use the public sector facilities or gain sponsorship from private sector companies). The voluntary sector is mainly funded by its own members, in the form of membership and weekly training fees. These fees are used to cover the costs of pitches, equipment and training. Sponsorship is very hard to come by for voluntary clubs as so many clubs that are looking for.

Purpose of the study

Present study investigated the goals and objectives of youth football academies in Greece, according to the sector that they operate (public, private, voluntary)

Especially the objectives of the survey were:

- a) Analyze goals and objectives of the commercial sector category academies
- b) Analyze goals and objectives of the public sector category academies
- c) Analyze goals and objectives of the voluntary sector category academies
- d) Offer proposals for the further development of youth football academies in the district of Trikala.

Methodology

Sample

The survey involved fourteen children's football academies in the district of Trikala in central Greece, during the time 2010-2011. Data collection came from questionnaires that were completed by twenty eight sports executives. There were fourteen people who represent the four manager groups and other fourteen people represent the coaching staff. Their ages were between 35 <50 years.

Questionnaire

The collection of data came by interviews which consisted of open and closed questions relevant to the content. Qualitative research is based on the premise that gaining knowledge about humans is impossible without describing human experience as it is lived and as it is defined by the actors themselves. Also qualitative implies a direct concern with experience as it is "lived". The items of the evaluation tool were chosen by

two experienced administrative staff and two coaching staff of children's football academies. Also two researchers were participated of for the following three levels of our research.

a. The administrative structure of football teams. Five items were constructed to collect information on four years academies' advancement recording the following topics: 1) the annual targets of the academy, 2) the qualifications of the board members, 3) the organizational structure of the academy, 4) financial academy's budget, 5) the calculation of parent contributions, 6) the number of sponsors, 7) the promotion of the programs in local community 8) the growth of public relationships, 9) the participation in tournaments, and finally 10) the cooperation with parents.

b. The structure of coaching staff. Five items were constructed to gather information about the followings: 1) the number of all ages athletes training programs, 2) the analysis of program quality, 3) the centage recording between athletes - coaches - escorts, 4) the time of athlete's remaining in the group, 5) the coaching assets, 6) the techniques of trainers' training skills, 7) coaches' training methods, 8) additional aims such as healthy diets, ethical behavior, lifelong exercise.

c. Supportive services. Were recorded: all facilities, changing rooms, the ways of attendance and the ways of children's removals from their trainings, the presence of medical staff in training, to provision of other additional sports services (for example psychologists, performance measurement).

The evaluation tool was tested for its validity and reliability of all issues and items which were choose by a group of football researchers. Also, a successful pilot study came before.

Process

There was a voluntary participation of managers and coaching staff. The completion of the questionnaires took place in the academy offices by administration staff and in the football stadiums by coaching staff. In the beginning were provided all the necessary instructions to participants. The completion of the questionnaires was ranged from 15 to 25 minutes time.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research was used in this study, because is a method of inquiry employed in many different academic disciplines, traditionally in the social sciences, but also in market research and further contexts (Gibbs, 2002). Qualitative researchers aim to gather an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern

such behavior. The qualitative method searches why and how man make a decision, not just what, where, when. Hence, smaller but focused samples are more often needed than large samples. In the conventional view, qualitative methods produce information only on the particular cases studied, and any more general conclusions are only propositions (informed assertions). Quantitative methods can then be used to seek empirical support for such research hypotheses.

Qualitative data are forms of information gathered in a nonnumeric form. Common examples of such data are: Interview transcript, Field notes (notes taken in the field being studied), Video, Audio recordings, Images, Documents (reports, meeting minutes, e-mails).

Qualitative Data Analysis is the range of processes and procedures whereby we move from the collected qualitative data into some form of explanation, understanding or interpretation of the people and situations that have been investigated.

Results

The provision of sports facilities and opportunities in Greece is the result of the interaction between the public, private and voluntary sectors. All three sectors provide different, yet when looked at closely, similar services in sport and recreation issues. The same distinction was made in present research for the fourteen youth football academies, creating the following three football team categories: a) Five youth academies were included in the commercial sector, b) Four youth academies were included in the public sector, and c) Five youth academies were included in the voluntary sector. Each category included almost the same number of youth participants / athletes.

The data of this study were collected after visiting researcher at the premises of the academies on different dates. Also took place the creation of separate individual interviews with administrative and coaching staff for each of the categories of football academies in the region of Trikala.

Regarding the first target of the study "Analyze goals and objectives of the commercial sector category academies"

The major responses direction of administrative and coaching staff of the five academies in this category of commercial sector was summarized in the following:

1) Management Issues

Most administration managers agreed that the vision of the teams in this category aims a) to develop brand name of each team / company in local markets, b) to provide high quality services and c) to be in profitable economic progress. The responsibility of government to implement these axes was the board of the company's shareholders. The company's shareholders were being changed after elections. The financial strength of each team was based mainly on contributions of athletes / clients, and ranges from 30 to 50 Euros per month. The concept of sponsorship and cooperation with other trade bodies has been activated by only 20% of groups as an additional income. The promotion of the category groups that belong to commercial factor is achieved through the print media, radio television and placing posters. There is much effort in developing good public relations with teachers, traders and establish contacts with groups in other regions of the country. Finally, there is emphasis on creating an important site, which is a part of social networks and provides a wealth of football information.

2) Training process subjects

The majority of the coaches agreed that the main goal of the coaching is the technical and tactical training of the participating athletes and the integration in militant groups. There is a strict separation of the sub-working groups of children depending on age and performance. The training plan pays little attention to the development of physical fitness of children, in contrast with the culture of football skills. The training hours are selected to fit the schedules of children, to create tension and conditions like in a football match. The largest number of coaches holds a degree from either national schools football or international football federation. Usually the coaches are evaluated for the performance of the team members who trains and the results that the teams achieve.

3) Supportive services

The training takes place in an 11x11, 8x8 & 5x5 fields, depending on the age of children and the training target. All fields are equipped with synthetic floor, 4th generation and the conditions of changing rooms are excellent. Most other groups have coaches, psychologist and nutritionist. There is a nurse to provide first aid when necessary throughout the time of training and football match. There is also planning to submit the small players to periodic audits indicators of fitness and anthropometric

characteristics. Finally, there is a concern for the movements from home to training courses and vice versa with private buses.

Regarding the second target of the study “Analyze goals and objectives of the public sector category academies”.

The major responses direction of administrative and coaching staff of the four academies in this category of public sector was summarized in the following:

1) Management Issues

The majority of the sport managers agreed that the vision of the groups targeted in:

a) the creation of a lifelong exercise in the participants, b) the creation of a love feeling for the sport and the culture of fair play and c) the increase of the participants number. The council of each municipal authority that changes every four years has the responsibility of the implementation of these axes. The participating athletes have no financial burden, while the costs of the whole effort totally belong to the local authority. The concept of sponsorship and cooperation with other trade bodies in the region is low and only recently due to economic crisis in the country, made similar efforts. The promotion of the category groups that belongs to commercial factor is obtained exclusively from the radio of the municipality and the visit of all public schools in the area. There is not attempt to develop relationships with other public bodies.

2) Training process subjects

The majority of the coaches agreed that that the main goal of the coaching team has been the technical training and increase the participation in local sports teams. Simultaneously, the Council reserves groups which participate in local tournaments. There is flexibility in the control of the groups regarding to number of athletes per week, while there is a large enough range of training sessions to cover the time available for children. The training plan gives equal emphasis both on the development of physical fitness and on the culture of football skills. During trainings were created a fertile climate for participation, satisfaction and prevention of injury. The largest number of coaches holds a degree from either national schools football and there is not evaluation plan for coaches. Parents are more involved in the transport of their children to the training field and their remaining during the training as they are being socialized together.

3) Supportive services

All groups training take place in municipal courts, which all have natural grass, while the changing rooms are in indifferent condition. Also there is free use of all municipal coaching fields when required by the bad weather conditions. Regarding to ancillary services such as physiotherapist, psychologist and nutritionist, there is not additional staff. For first aid if necessary, there is a direct transfer in the nearest health centre. Athletes checked indicators of fitness and anthropometric characteristics at the beginning and also in the end of the coaching season.

Regarding the second objective of the study “Analyze goals and objectives of the voluntary sector category academies”

The major responses direction of administrative and coaching staff of the four academies in this category of voluntary sector was summarized in the following:

1) Management Issues

The majority of the sport managers agreed that the vision of the teams in this category aims to: a) the development of football talent each child / player, b) the creation of a strong team and children's success in local and national championships and c) the consolidation of the group name and its economic survival. The responsibility of the implementation of these axes has a board that changes every two years, and usually has to develop other sport fields. The cost for each children participants / athletes is around 25-40 euro per month, but also provides scholarships to people with low economic profile or football talents. The concept of sponsorship is strong, as well as the cooperation with commercial companies at local and national level. The main gain is in sporting goods, not money because of the financial crisis in the country. The promotion of programs of voluntary sector groups is achieved by radio, web presence, 3x3 football tournaments in public places and posting posters. The voluntary involvement of parents is intense, as many ancillary functions of the team assigned to them, such as dinners, excursions and other social events. The public relations are developed with the cooperation of administrators and parents of the children.

2) Subjects training process

The majority of the coaches agreed that the goal of training is the high frequency of trainings, the full implementation of technical training, but also the simultaneous improvement of physical condition. The coaches agreed that whole team pushed to

implement the plans of the team and participate in many tournaments and championships. All coaches graduated from universities but managers try to recruit those who are having football experiences. The evaluation is done with the coaches as a result of their work. The fee for coaches is satisfactory, but many of them are working longer hours. A lot of emphasis is given on the promotion of football talent and effort to further placing on the national or even international football market. There is an extensive network of major groups in the national championship with talents of a particular geographical region of Greece. This means a significant economic benefit of the group's administration and the families of the children.

3) Supportive services

Football academies in this category were used one football field for official matches and another one for training. Both have a very good quality of natural grass as the climate conditions that exist in this area are very good. Some groups also have indoor sports facilities that use them as gyms. Most teams have a physical therapist during the training, while a psychologist's and nutritionist's tasks assigned directly to the coaches. Throughout the training and matches there is a nurse if necessary. In recent years there are many attempts to cooperate with scientific institutions for reliable controls as indicators of fitness and controls in anthropometric characteristics.

Discussion and Conclusion

This investigation revealed information which expressed by the participating administrative and coaching staff of children's academies. The above confirms that the youth football academies in the district of Trikala in central Greece operate successfully, while maintaining a reliable means of production football's childhood talents.

This mechanism has important differences in goals and practices, according to the different children's academies owners, i.e. 'commercial', 'state' or 'voluntary'.

The above qualitative data which was collected in this study, offers the great opportunity to researchers to form a separate image for each one sport sector, as follows:

Commercial sector

Regarding this, the results for the subset of youth football academies (Table 1) suggested that researchers could make the following assumptions: To become stronger

and realize the brand name of each company through image promoting of owned facilities and the fact that the facilities are located near the urban area. Strong evidence is also, the skilled and well qualified coaching staff as well as the company's effort to cooperate with other international football academies, Finally, the high level of organization of academies is should be noted.

Similarly the weak data should be the lack of indoor training fields during bad weather conditions of winter and the lack of involvement of young athletes in official competitions of local leagues. Even more, poor information of parents on benefits of college for their children, maintain loose relationships between team and family environment for young athletes. Therefore, the groups should seek to create a closed football field and expand cooperation in the team with clubs outside the borders of Greece. The improvement of scientific training will help to identify children's talents. Finally, there are problems that should be solved. Such as lack of time for small / athletes to participate in training, the recent economic crisis in Greece, the lack of participation in official national competitions, and particularly fierce competition with other local children's football academies.

Table 1. Swot analysis of the Commercial Sector Youth football Academies.

<p><u>Strengths.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing high quality services • Excellent facilities close to the city. • The organized transportation of athletes on the premises of the Academy 	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of indoor training fields. • Poor cooperation with parents of athletes • Lack of cooperation with scientific institutions
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperation with associations abroad. • Intensification of talent identification • Utilization of any potential public relations 	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited time to train athletes from the school grounds and tutorials. • There are major donors • Lack of participation in official competitions.

Public sector

The results for the subset of youth football academies (Table 2) suggested that we should make the following. To emphasize in the free assistance applying for small players in society and the efforts being made to join the academy in particular to children's health and lifelong exercise. To reward the voluntary help of parents and to strengthen the relationship between parents and sports agents. It will require substantial action on the reorganization of the group at the administrative level and the instant removal of all inert agents. Also is very important the enhancing of the quality of sports facilities and the improvement of the quality of changing rooms. The application of fair play in trainings should be extended to competitive level with the participation of small / athletes in official competitions. The barrier of young athletes transporting should be dialled with the use of services such public transport. The further education of coaches and their evaluation should be done regularly. It is imperative a immediate finding of sponsors for two reasons: a) the opening of the body in the free market and also coming upon the challenges from the competition of the academies of trade body based in the city of Trikala and b) to address increased operating costs and also addressing the threat of a sudden stop of the municipality finance to the academy.

Table 2. Swot analysis of the Public Sector Youth football Academies.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Free subscription to the athletes. Voluntary help of parents. Contribution to lifelong sports</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Loosely organized at the administrative level. Lack of participation in official competitions. View private academies in the media</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Easy penetration to promote Extended hours facilities / training Ability to use public relations</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>Lack of evaluation and promotion of talent Competition from the private operator Risk of discontinuation of funding from the City</p>

Voluntary sector

The results suggested that it should be made the following assumptions: To establish in the parents mind that the voluntary sector act as nurseries for official football racing teams participating in local and national tournaments in the country. Also, is important the utilization of the existing qualified and experienced football coaching staff for the identification and the promotion of football talents. Also, if the managers can successfully pursue their football talents in the biggest clubs in the country and abroad, it will be a great opportunity for the team but also for the small / athletes. The short term financial assistance for athletes and scholarships are a magnet for children with low ability to pay. The fertile coaching environment created by the combination of the good sports facilities and the voluntary help of parents of small / athletes and it is a guarantee for continued success. Potential threat for the team is the recent economic crisis in the country and the possible termination of funding of the group of entrepreneurs in the area. The economic issue perhaps brings even more difficulties for the frequent involvement in matches outside the district.

Table 3. Swot analysis of the Voluntary Sector Youth football Academies.

<p><u>Strengths</u></p> <p>Skilled-experienced coaching staff.</p> <p>The Academy is a children's nursery football match.</p> <p>The existence of 'scholarship' rather than economic assistance</p>	<p><u>Weaknesses</u></p> <p>Loose connection between the team and parents</p> <p>Low penetration of visibility in schools for recruiting football talents.</p> <p>High frequency of workouts and the pressure for high performance athletes.</p>
<p><u>Opportunities</u></p> <p>Frequent participation in official competitions</p> <p>The promotion of small / large groups of athletes.</p> <p>Identifying talent / athletes.</p>	<p><u>Threats</u></p> <p>The low cooperation with scientific institutions.</p> <p>The limited number of potential athletes pumping due to the small population of the area</p> <p>Lack of money to participate in a nationwide tournament.</p>

There is a common objective of these analyzes of the operation of the youth football academies and the three organizations. The combining of their results and the proposals in order to create consensus on further developing of the whole child football sports market in the geographical area of Greece. The administration of the academies should begin to move away from solutions based on intuition and be guided by the power of things with new scientific methods and systems that provide science (Crompton, 2000). It is essential for the football academies to know the needs of children, how to meet and provide high quality sports and leisure services to them in order to constantly attraction of new kids on the athletic area and to prevail over their competitors (Torkildsen, 1998).

The results of this investigation, alleging that football academies should develop their own philosophy about football in order to achieve their goal, which is none other than to provide proper services for sports and recreation. But also teach them except football, rules of good behavior, "fair play" the adoption of healthy diets and finally to infuse children the spirit of lifelong sports (Biddle, Sallis, & Cavill 1998). Additionally, the sport of football as a simply sport and recreational sports should be made widely known to parents, all family members, and throughout the local communities. Furthermore children can find an outlet in sports instead of other everyday social activities that are inextricable at a modern society (for example violence, drugs) (Haywood, 1990).

Proposals

Regarding the fourth objective of the research that is "preparing proposals for development of youth football academies, the most significant proposals that emerged were: a) the requirement for direct guidance in a new management philosophy of all public instrumentalities, b) the application of scientific methods of training and cooperation in local scientific institutions, c) the provision of any energy development to be progressed in the light of recent economic crisis in Greece.

More specifically the athletic manager should proceed directly to:

- The Establishment of the reputation of children's academies as a part of education and football's development.
- The Increase of the number of children who exercise or play football.
- The Establishment of a central vision of fair play in training and lifelong exercise.
- The Use of experienced technical and administrative capacity of groups.
- The Attraction of the interest of new donors and funders.

- The cooperation with public agencies for the development of sports tourism by organizing early age national football championships.
- The improvement of the sports facilities that are in a good condition and the creation of indoor sports.
 - The Attempts to create a group of girls.
 - The Connection with abroad groups.
 - The Utilization of the population with middle or high socioeconomic status.
 - The Creation of a feeling of cooperation.
 - The Utilization of the scientific infrastructure of sports.

The youth football academies in the region of Greece have the experience and the perspective of development, but require openness, policy change and link with relevant international standards. This research contributed to the improved design and development of children's football in the region and more widely in our country. Participation in football teams can greatly improve children's entertainment and recreation and lead to a better quality of life.

Future research could aim to the full understanding of incentives of small players for participation in football as a result of satisfaction of their desires and expectations. So kids enjoy their free time in football and general in sport. Finally it provides a prevention theme of daily delinquent behaviors that take place so often in our modern society.

Application in Sport

The results of this study aimed to help the managers of youth football academies to improve the sport services that they offered on two axes. The first axis was appealed to administrative manager and in particular to reform youth football academies principles in Greece, according to the sector that they operate (public, private, non-commercial / voluntary). The second axis was appealed to football coaches and in particular to adapt modern football philosophy and training principles. These could help managers to understand the international football trends and apply them to football academies in the region of Trikala in Greece.

Additionally this study increased the interest of parents for their children's participation generally in sports and particular at youth football academies. Thought football participation children could avoid unhealthy day life habits (smoking, over-use computers, eating unhealthy foods, body immobility) and acquire lifelong exercise.

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