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Refinement of the Foot PASS model for a high quality certification of professional football clubs

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Background

Since 2007 the German Football Association (DFB) and Professional Football League (DFL) use the quality and performance management system 'Foot PASS' for the certification of their 'Leistungszentren', i.e. the youth academies of the 1. and 2. Bundesliga clubs (Van Hoecke, et al., 2008). Based on the results of these quality audits, among other things, important financial rewards emanating from the UEFA Solidarity Fund are granted to the clubs. The idea behind this is to emphasize the importance of a high-quality youth academy with regards to a (more) efficient development of 'home grown' talent. In their vision, this is a key factor with regard to the future success of the Bundesliga and German football in general.

Central to this quality policy is a valid and reliable evaluation system accepted by the clubs and their Youth Academy Managers in particular. For this reason, continuous efforts are made to systematically improve the objectivity and functionality of the instrument and enhance the procedures for data collection.

Objectives

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the validity and reliability of PASS 1.0 in order to optimize the objectivity of the Foot PASS instrument. Besides, it was our aim to refine the auditing process.

Methods

After a first implementation of Foot PASS in the 36 Bundesliga clubs in the season 2007-2008, the YA Managers were invited to evaluate the project by means of a closed questionnaire (5-point Likert scale). At the end, 23 clubs (63,9%) returned this questionnaire.

After this general evaluation, 12 group discussions were organized to discuss the face validity of the checklists more in depth. Per dimension all criteria were examined, especially with regard to

their practical relevance and contribution to a successful talent development system. A total of 35 experts from the clubs, the league, the association and several universities participated in at least one of these intensive workshops.

Results and discussion

In general, Foot PASS was evaluated quite positive by the YA Managers. However, the quality system was considered first a management tool rather than an assessment tool (modus of 4 for both; median of 4 and 3 respectively). Especially with regard to the objectivity and relevance of the checklists, the initial position was neutral (resp. 39.1% and 34.8%) to positive (resp. 47.8% and 43.5%).

Despite of this, in the group discussions 92% of the 524 presented standards was assessed as highly relevant by the experts. Nevertheless, more than a quarter of the 461 initial standards has been refined (14%) or deleted (15%) and 63 new criteria were added.

Furthermore, the weighing factors of the dimensions, sub-dimensions and individual standards were also under consideration. Next to the adjustments to the checklists (new and deleted criteria), some new elements were emphasized with direct consequences for the relative values of the 8 dimensions in the system. Finally, some minor changes were made to these main dimensions, which resulted in the following adapted PASS structure:

1. strategic and financial planning
2. organisational structure
3. talent identification and development
4. athletic and social support
5. academy staff
6. communication and co-operation
7. facilities and equipment
8. effectiveness: transition and opportunities

Finally, new software has been developed to enhance the face validity, reliability and efficiency for data collection. These efforts have not only led to a better instrument, uniquely designed for this specific application, but also to a better understanding of the field, which is also important in order to realise the intended goal: striving together for a better youth development that results in more and better performing home grown players in the club teams.

References

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