

# YOUTH SOCCER ACADEMY - A MODEL OF A MULTIFUNCTIONAL SPORT ORGANISATION

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## Aim

Aim is to represent the concept, structure, working framework and wider social meaning of the Youth Soccer Academy - a new, unique model of a multifunctional sport organisation.

## Practice description

The Youth Soccer Academy was founded in June 2010, in the town of Osijek, North-Eastern part of Croatia, on an initiative of two former international soccer players, both born and actually living in this town. They were guided by the enthusiastic ideas of transferring their rich knowledge and experience in playing football on younger generations and of investing additional efforts in those among them who might have had the predispositions as new talents. The Academy brings together boys and adolescents from 6 to 18 years of age, in an unselected manner, and provide them with the opportunity to take regular training under the supervision of professional coaches. For those attenders who are recognised by the Academy staff as having the true potential, individually-tailored and age-suited football trials are then organised, by giving talented boys the opportunity to progress and develop like professional footballers. The Academy arranges a series of friendlies and showcase matches, within the country and in neighboring countries, to enable each player to put into practise what they have learned during the training and the chance to be noticed by the scouts and coaches as well. From time to time, travels to some of developed European countries are organised, with the aim to visit the elite football clubs, to further motivate young talents for the football sport and to provide all others with new learning experience. Twice a year, all members are underwent to medical check ups, performed by the sport medicine specialist.

## Context description

The founders, ex football representatives, used the field under a 20-y concession deal and invested their own funds to build the supporting facilities. The central house contains offices, changing rooms, a gym and a restaurant. About 20 persons, licenced coaches and other staff members are employed in. The Academy has the status as the sport association, that means, the financial aid is provided by the local community and the national sport federation. Another source of financing is provided by selling the sports gear for the company which, in turn, serves as a sponsor partner.

## Implications & learning

This unique organisational form of the Youth Soccer Academy, based on the public-private partnership and the leadership of the highly professional sportsmen, qualifies the Academy for multiple functions. Besides functioning as the recreative sport organisation for children and the youth, the Academy also accomplishes its role as the official sport school, however, by providing free-of-charge services. It is especially important in lower income countries, to allow children an unrestricted access to the sport professionals and to give them the opportunity to express and further develop their potentials and capabilities. Additional benefits include learning on fitness and healthy lifestyles, as well as social and personal development. By combining trade and catering, with the sport activities, the Academy also yields direct economic benefits. This comprehensively designed sport organisation might be a prototype for developing areas of Europe.

## Key words

Soccer Academy, the youth, a multifunctional model, developing countries

