

Management of Football Academies in Turkey: The Coach Perspective*

Gökhan BOZKURT¹[†], Cláudia DIAS², Maria José CARVALHO²

¹Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal

²Universidade do Porto, Porto, Portugal

²Centre for Research, Education, Innovation and Intervention in Sport, Porto, Portugal

Original Article

Received: 03.09.2024

Accepted: 22.01.2025

DOI: 10.47778/ejsse.1542626

Online Publishing: 31.03.2025

Abstract

The management of football academies is a multifaceted process that involves different influential stakeholders. Coaches, as key stakeholders, contribute significantly to the overall success of a football academy. Recognizing coaches' pivotal role in the developmental journey of young football players, the current study employed the systems approach to explore the management practices of football academies in Turkey, with a particular emphasis on the perspective of coaches. The primary objective was to comprehend the challenges and obstacles confronted by Turkish football academies in terms of management and their implications for the overall efficiency of the academies. Furthermore, the study aimed to delineate the fundamental requirements and necessary services encompassing the input, process, feedback, output, and environmental aspects of the football academy system. Fifteen head coaches of senior teams in the top two divisions in Turkey with previous coaching experience in football academies were interviewed using a semi-structured interview. The results were analysed using qualitative content analysis. The findings indicated that management should prioritise specialised coaching approaches tailored to football academies. Training young football players in academies requires coaches specifically trained for this purpose, as it is a distinct profession from those coaching senior teams. The study proposes a solid recommendation to improve coaching education programs, both in quantity and quality, addressing specific challenges in Turkish football academies. The article ultimately emphasises the importance of adopting a systems theory approach to achieve successful football academy management while accounting for environmental factors to achieve sustainable practices in Turkey's football academies.

Keywords: Head coach, Academy coach, Football academy, Football management

* This study is derived from Gökhan Bozkurt's thesis completed at the University of Porto entitled "*The management of professional football academies in Turkey: The Managers, coaches and players' perspectives.*"

[†]**Corresponding Author:** Gökhan BOZKURT, **E-mail:** up201200385@up.pt

INTRODUCTION

Effective management in a sport organization depends on gaining a clear understanding of the relevant stakeholder's perceptions and preferences (Chelladurai, 2014) since the internal stakeholders' involvement would directly influence the performance of the general management practice in the organizations (Freeman, 2010). Coaches are important internal stakeholders who influence the player development (O'Connor et al., 2018). In this regard, recognizing coaches as influential internal stakeholders in the academy management process, the present study examined the football academy management phenomenon holistically from the coaches' perspectives by adopting a systems theory approach.

As internal stakeholders in the player development schemes, the literature consistently highlights the significant role of coaching and the constructive relationship between the athlete and the coach (Côté et al., 2013; Mesquita et al., 2015). Thus, coaching is seen as a crucial prerequisite for attaining elite performance (Cushion et al., 2012; Nesti & Sulley, 2015) in the talent development process. Indeed, the skills and knowledge of the academy coaches can be critical factors influencing the quality of instruction provided (Côté & Gilbert, 2014) in football academies. Furthermore, coaches are responsible for creating a positive environment that fosters learning and growth within the academies (Amorose & Anderson, 2007).

In light of the evident challenges and difficulties encountered by elite football development (Sunay & Kaya, 2018) and the setbacks in player development (Akkoyun, 2014; Çevik & Onağ, 2019) in Turkey, there is a noticeable shortage of academy-raised players participating in Turkish football (Poli et al., 2016; Şenel & Saygın, 2021; Topkaya, 2015). Therefore, the research, by adopting a systems theory approach, aimed to identify the essential requirements and services within the input (resources, staff and talent selection), process (daily operations and services), feedback (evaluative information and communication), output (player development and achievements), and environmental (external influences) dimensions of the football academies in Turkey, from the perspectives of football coaches, leading to practical proposals that could enhance the management processes of these academies.

At this point, it is important to clarify why the present study focused on senior team coaches rather than the academy coaches. Football players trained by academy coaches eventually switch to senior team coaches when they join professional teams. These senior team coaches then become the main responsible for evaluating their performance at the elite level. In other words, the destiny of young academy players is determined by the senior team coaches. Several studies also showed that the presence of appropriate coaching personnel, within the senior team, who encourage the adjustment of young newcomers, has a significant impact on the players' progression to the first team and elite football (Roynsdal, 2015). In addition, it should also be noted that real-match experiences in senior teams (Houlihan & Green, 2008; Kaplan, 2016; Stotlar & Wonders, 2006), along with the senior team coach's support to the pro-youth policy of the club (Mills et al., 2014) are highly critical

components of the young players' development process. Moreover, the age at which most athletes reach peak levels of performance in team sports, like football, occurs usually in the mid-to-late twenties (Côté et al., 2012; Hugaasen et al., 2014; Moran & Toner, 2017). In other words, football players generally reach top levels after the academy education years (Helsen et al., 2000), which makes senior team coaches substantially influential on the development of athletes throughout their professional elite careers (Wylleman & Lavallee, 2004). As a result, the perspectives and approaches adopted by senior team coaches towards young players play a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of the academy management process. Their pivotal role within the football system ultimately determines the development and success of the players who are raised by a football academy.

METHOD

Research Model

An exploratory study design was employed, utilizing a qualitative approach to explain the mechanisms and underlying reasons how systems operate in Turkish academies.

Participants

The selection of participants for this study employed purposive sampling, a method focused on choosing individuals whose perspectives or experiences align with the study question (Patton, 2015). The criterion sampling method was utilized to simplify the process, ensuring participants met predetermined criteria. Specifically, we focused on active coaches working in the top division of Turkey (*Süper Lig*) within a senior team during the data collection period. Participants were required to have either a UEFA Pro license or a UEFA-A license. Moreover, coaches were required to have a minimum of one year of academy coaching experience to have familiarity with the subject matter. The final number of 15 was determined by the saturation technique (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). The ages of the coaches varied between 42 to 70 years old and 13 of them were former professional football players. Their education level varied from high school ($n = 6$) to university degree ($n = 9$). One of them had a master's degree and one of them had a Ph.D. in sports science.

Data collection tools and process

Data collection was conducted through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using open-ended questions (Veal & Darcy, 2014). An interview guide specifically designed for this study served as a framework, consisting of key questions relevant to the research. The interview format was designed to elicit genuine thoughts, personal feelings (Whiting, 2008), and individual stories (Rabionet, 2011) from the interviewees. During the interviews, the participants were asked questions related to four main themes that was defined in interview design: (a) personal background; (b) the ideal services of the academy; (c) current issues faced by the coaches within the club concerning the academy management; (d) the club's responsibility on the process. An introductory conversation was employed as a warm-up, establishing a comfortable and relaxed

atmosphere. The presentation of the introduction and instructions was detailed to encourage participation. For example, we explicitly communicated that the interview wasn't an examination, and participants were encouraged to share their genuine opinions and experiences. Consistency was maintained by asking all coaches the same set of questions, but flexibility in the order was allowed to align with the conversation's natural flow. At the interview's conclusion, participants were given the chance to complement or clarify any discussed and undiscussed points, ensuring that their final thoughts or insights were heard.

Before the actual data collection, a pilot interview was carried out by the main researcher with a coach. The insights gained from the pilot interview led to several minor adjustments and updates to the interview process. To initiate data collection, potential participants were contacted via phone calls to provide them with detailed information about the study's purpose and nature. Those expressing interest were then scheduled for interviews at times convenient for both parties, taking into consideration the participants' availability. All interviews were conducted in person at the participants' respective clubs, with the primary researcher conversing in the participants' native language. This approach aimed to create a safe and comfortable environment for the respondents, ensuring their ease and well-being throughout the interview process. The participants were explicitly informed about the confidentiality of their answers, ensuring the privacy and protection of their responses. All participants were given the option to opt out of the research or choose not to answer specific questions if they felt uncomfortable. However, it is important to note that none of the participants chose to exercise this option. Instead, they actively and effectively collaborated by providing responses to all the questions posed during the interviews. With their consent, the interviews were recorded using a digital audio recording device. The duration of the interviews varied, ranging from a minimum of 40 minutes to slightly over an hour, allowing for a comprehensive exploration of the research topics.

Ethical Approval

Ethical approval for this study was obtained from “Comissão de Ética da Faculdade de Desporto da Universidade do Porto” with the code CEFADÉ 16-2024 on 26/04/2024.

Data analysis

Upon completion of the interviews, they were first transcribed verbatim in their native language and then translated into English, ensuring that the transcribed data could be evaluated by an additional researcher. Content analysis was performed to explore the content of the transcribed data. It is generally recommended to have around 15- 20 interviews for meaningful results in content analysis (Moser & Korstjens, 2018) and the research readily met this requirement. The data analysis process involved a combination of inductive and deductive approaches. Inductive analysis was employed to identify new categories that emerged from the collected data (Patton, 2015), while deductive analysis utilized pre-defined categories derived from existing literature (Schreier, 2012). After reviewing the *corpus*, the final categorization process was conducted (Bardin, 2004). In total, seven main categories emerged from the data analysis as: important facilities, player development

issues, coaching issues, management issues, club governance issues, federation issues, sports policy issues. These main categories also divided into specific sub-categories to facilitate the interpretation of analysed data. Manual coding was utilized to assign codes to the data (Lee, 2021), and the coded and color-coded transcripts were shared with the other researcher to ensure reliability. This collaborative approach aimed to enhance trustworthiness in the code checks and minimize interpretive bias (Patton, 2002).

FINDINGS

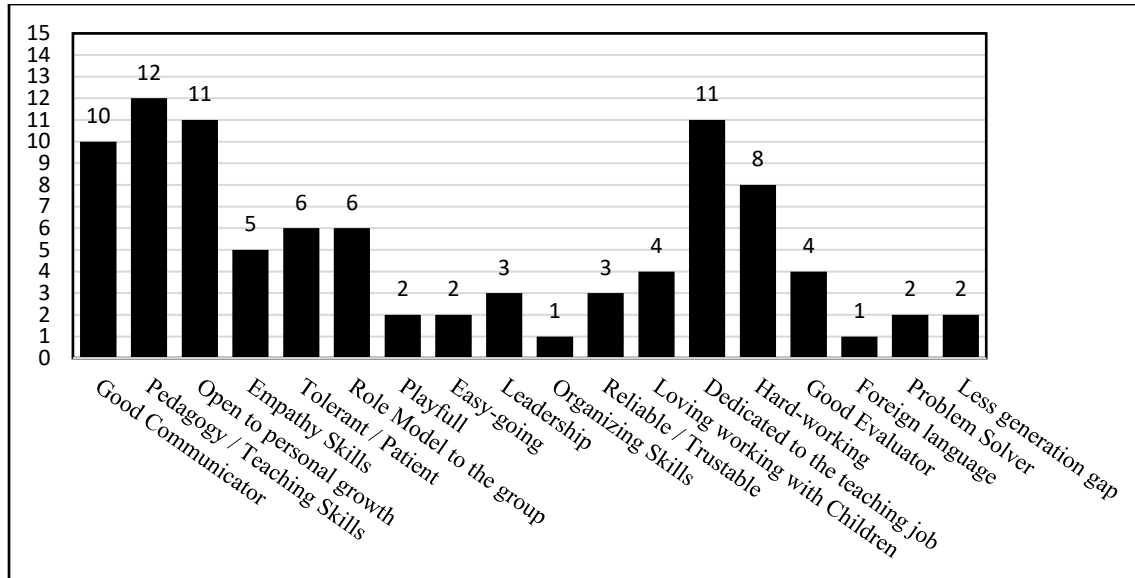
The requisites and services within the input, process, feedback, output, and environmental aspects of a football academy system, as perceived by Turkish football coaches, are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Domains that affect the overall performance of the football academies

Input Domain	Process Domain
Players	Management Quality
Coaches	Club governance Quality
Staff	Service Quality
Resources	
Feedback Domain	Output Domain
Communication between the academy and with the A team.	Elite Player
External Domain	
External Influencer + Football Federation + Sport Policy	

Input Domain

Ten of the coaches claimed that talent was a prerequisite for nurturing exceptional players within the academy, as the quality of incoming players would influence their subsequent development in the academy years and hence, they stated that finding the best talent should be the primary aim of football academy management. On the other hand, three coaches expressed concerns regarding the inadequate scouting practices within Turkish academies. Two participants draw attention to the relative age effect in the selection process, noting that players born earlier in the selection year may have an unfair advantage in the current academy system. Additionally, two coaches recommended focusing on targeted regions to enhance scouting outcomes than a nation-wide scouting. Thirteen participants acknowledged that coaching quality directly impacted the quality of player development within football academies. They emphasized the importance of academy coaches possessing specific knowledge and skills that could positively impact the academy management process. These proposed skills that the academy coaches should possess to enhance the development process are shown in Graphic 1 below.



Graph 1. Ideal coaching skills/attributes to enhance academy performance

Still regarding coaching, eleven coaches expressed their concerns regarding the low coaching quality in the academies. For instance, four coaches expressed concerns that the coaches were not proficient in integrating technological software into their training programs. According to coaches, this quality issue primarily stems from the inadequate and insufficient coaching education opportunities provided by the Turkish Football Federation for coaches who wished to work in academies. To enhance coaching quality, the coaches ($n = 11$) advised on the implementation of additional educational courses, specifically designed with strong content for those interested in working in academies. Regarding the content, the coaches underlined the need of more pedagogic aspects ($n = 15$), expert training science knowledge ($n = 12$), child development and physiology knowledge ($n = 8$) and communication ($n = 3$). A significant majority of the coaches, 14 out of 15, agreed that academy coaching should be treated as a distinct area of expertise separated from senior team coaching. Seven coaches went even further, asserting that academy coaching should be divided and specialized based on specific age groups. Fourteen coaches believed that having a former playing career should not be a prerequisite for becoming a coach in the academies, due to lack of pedagogic knowledge. However, thirteen coaches acknowledged that former playing career could also provide certain advantages in the general development and management process such as empathy, communication and observation skills. For seven participants, the ideal academy coach would be someone who possess both an academic knowledge in coaching and former playing experience. In addition to academy coaching, four coaches also emphasized that the head coach of the senior team plays an even more critical role in the final development phase of academy players.

Besides coaching, eight participants acknowledged that the quality of the other staff members in the academy had a direct impact on the development of players and they emphasized that the quality of the supportive staff in the academy would significantly influence the academy's overall management performance. Thirteen coaches stated that the selection of expert and competent staff

for the academy should be one of the responsibilities of the management team. Moreover, seven coaches remarked on the importance of clubs making longer contractual commitments, on a full-time basis, with expert academy staff to effectively pursue long-term objectives in a more professional environment.

On the other hand, all fifteen participants agreed that there was a lack of competent and expert staff in the academies. Confirming this, thirteen subjects acknowledged the absence of professionalism in Turkish football academies. Four participants conveyed doubts about the lack of academic knowledge among most academy staff, while six coaches observed a lack of pedagogical approach in their work with young players. In addition to pedagogical issues, four coaches raised concerns regarding the academy staff's inability to engage in ongoing professional development. In relation to this, eight coaches stated that there must be constant internal education courses in the academies to equip the staff with the necessary and up-to-date knowledge and skills.

Next to adequate human resources, thirteen coaches underlined the importance of having adequate physical resources for a better developmental process and eleven emphasized that facilities enhanced the effectiveness of coaching and the quality of training in the development process. Similarly, eight coaches stated the physical conditions of the academy were an important success criterion for the academy's overall management performance. In addition, coaches specifically stated that proper academy facilities were a critical component of a successful academy management process ($n = 10$), positively impacting the motivation and performance of players ($n = 5$) and providing a competitive advantage over rival academies ($n = 7$). On the other hand, ten coaches expressed their apprehensions about the lack of proper facilities in Turkish academies and explicitly referred the immediate need for improved infrastructure to support the development process. Still regarding the academy facilities, eight coaches expressed their dissatisfaction with the severe lack of football pitches in the clubs. Relatedly, six subjects emphasized that having adequate and high-quality pitches was essential for effective academy management and it was a sign of respect towards the youth. Furthermore, eleven coaches believed that good pitches were crucial for conducting high-quality training sessions during the academy years and it helps preventing the risk of player injuries.

Concerning the facility's location, eight coaches considered it advantageous to have the academy facilities located on the same site as the senior team. The reasons to advocate same-site provision included: creating inspiration and motivation ($n = 8$), having role models ($n = 2$), promoting better relations between the two sides ($n = 4$), fostering better communication ($n = 5$), facilitating adaptation to professional football ($n = 2$), facilitating the transition periods to the A team ($n = 3$), concentrating on goal-setting ($n = 7$) and mentorship opportunities ($n = 2$). Four coaches stated that these benefits could be secured if the same site provision was implemented after a certain age group. In contrast, five participants were against the same site provision because they thought that these two institutions have different agendas, and it could be misleading to youngster who had not become professional footballer yet. Two remained neutral and did not express a preference.

Process domain

Regarding management quality, twelve coaches stated that management's primary task was to provide suitable working environment for the coaches and the players. In relation to this, six coaches stated that the managers should have noticeable problem-solving skills for a smooth-running academy. Additionally, effective communication ($n = 2$), organizing ($n = 4$), planning ($n = 3$), providing necessary internal educations both to staff and players ($n = 8$) were the other components addressed for an effective academy management. Ten coaches noticed a lack of effective management and organization inside the academies in their clubs. Additionally, thirteen participants raised concerns about the lack of long-term strategic planning with respect to the operations of the academy. According to eight coaches, role confusion was prevalent in the club system concerning the academy due to a lack of clear job descriptions. Four of the coaches stated that clear job descriptions and expectations were the hallmark of improved performance in the academies. Especially, nine coaches stated that the club's governance has never informed them about their expectations for the academy. Six of the coaches underlined the utmost importance of effective coordination between the academy and the club to increase the management quality.

In terms of the controlling function of the academy management, eight coaches emphasized that evaluations concerning the academy's performance should be objective and based on long-term data and measurements, rather than relying on short-term subjective opinions. One coach even proposed that the evaluation of the academies should be conducted by an external expert or a neutral audit company.

Regarding club's corporate governance, the most mentioned problem, refereed by thirteen subjects, was the lack of interest in the academy by the club's governance. Relatedly, twelve coaches proposed that the strategic apex of the club should show more confidence and encouragement for the work of the academy staff. In relation to this problem, seven coaches stated that there is evident lack of investment in the academy by the club's governance. Thirteen coaches raised objections to low salaries in the academies. They believed that clubs should increase the salaries and pay on time to enhance the motivation, dedication and effectiveness of the academy staff. Four coaches also expressed concerns about nepotism within the clubs, particularly regarding the hiring of coaches. Interestingly, five coaches mentioned that the lack of investment in the academies was due to the abundance of money available at the senior level. Thus, as underlined by eight coaches, clubs often prioritized short-term gains and adopted a win-maximizing approach. This pressure to win was identified by thirteen coaches as a barrier that hindered the transition of academy-raised players into the senior team. To address this issue, six of them suggested that the club's governance should adopt an academy-friendly philosophy and mentality. In line with this thinking, ten coaches stressed that the club's mentality towards the academy played a crucial role in the transition of academy players into senior team. As an alternative solution, six coaches suggested that the academies should be more autonomous to operate more effectively and, in line with this, seven coaches declared that football was a professional job, and honorary or voluntary board members of the clubs should not interfere with the professional work of the academy. Ultimately, the club's

governance was seen as the main responsible party for the success or failure of the academies in the current club system, as stated by eleven coaches.

Regarding football development services in academies, three coaches expressed their dissatisfaction with the late start age for organized football in Turkey. Additionally, seven coaches emphasized the lack of physical development of academy players to cope with the physical demands of professional football at the highest level. Six coaches highlighted the noticeable absence of fitness training in the academies. Consequently, they expressed concerns about the academy-raised players' lack of dynamism and tempo, which are crucial for competing at an elite level. The coaches also pointed out that the overall training programs in the academies lack challenging and developmental elements. Specifically, five coaches emphasized the insufficient provision of individualized training tailored to the specific needs of each player. Furthermore, seven coaches emphasized the necessity of integrating psychological and mental preparations into the academy training programs. The coaches also mentioned the absence of a nationwide defined curriculum and teaching program within the academies, leaving the training solely reliant on the abilities and preferences of the clubs' coaches. In terms of the well-being of the young players before, during and after the trainings, eight coaches underlined the importance of proper nutrition, but this component was often missing in most academies. Additionally, three coaches expressed concerns about the lack of safe and hassle-free transportation services for young players, which also negatively affected the resting times and the management of trainings sessions.

Most of the coaches, 13 out of the 15, emphasized the significant role of playing real matches in the player development process. Among them, eight coaches believed that competitive league matches should serve as the final development and evaluation phase for an academy player. Hence, providing players with competitive match experiences was considered as an important service of an ideal football academy. Similarly, playing games was also seen as an essential part of adapting to professional football. Four coaches emphasized that playing contributed to improving game intelligence, while three stated that it played a vital role in building self-confidence on the pitch. The coaches underlined that regardless of what was taught in training sessions, tactical knowledge was truly acquired through game experience. Additionally, it was needed for the development of competitiveness and the enhancement of goal-setting skills. Finally, coaches highlighted that playing matches helped in the mental preparation of players for the upcoming challenges of senior football. Therefore, they stressed the importance of including more competitive matches in the player development program to foster tactical maturity. Two coaches presented an innovative idea, suggesting that academy football should be structured in a manner where youth teams participate in a minimum of two official games per week.

Concerning the transition from the academy to the senior team, while five coaches proposed that objective data and measurements should be utilized to make these important decisions, most of the coaches ($n = 11$) confessed that this transition was often conducted subjectively by the head coaches of the senior team. Ideally, eight coaches expressed that the transition process should be

planned and organized by the sports director of the club, while five coaches suggested it should be the responsibility of the academy director. Regardless of the specific approach, nine coaches emphasized the need for a well-prepared transition period with established institutional rules. Thirteen coaches stated that without established institutional regulations in force in the clubs, they would be reluctant to utilize young players in league games due to winning pressure on them. It was also highlighted that transition process should be conducted patiently, gradually, and with a pre-defined conscious approach. Six coaches also proposed the implementation of specially designed mentorship and mental support sessions for academy players during their transition to the professional level. Seven coaches strongly emphasized that sports psychology sessions should be included in the academy training program since it has an influence on player's holistic development. Five coaches acknowledged that mental skills play a pivotal role in differentiating exceptional players from average ones throughout their elite careers. However, it is noteworthy that the coaches acknowledged the prevailing neglect of the mental aspect of player development within Turkish academies.

Two coaches favoured the establishment of a career management department inside the academy structure to facilitate the transition process. One coach even suggested the introduction of a transition coach to facilitate this process. A loan-out department that constantly seeks playing opportunities for the players in the market was identified as another valuable service. Other two stated that career development was the responsibility of the academy management and proposed the inclusion of a career consultation service department to the players.

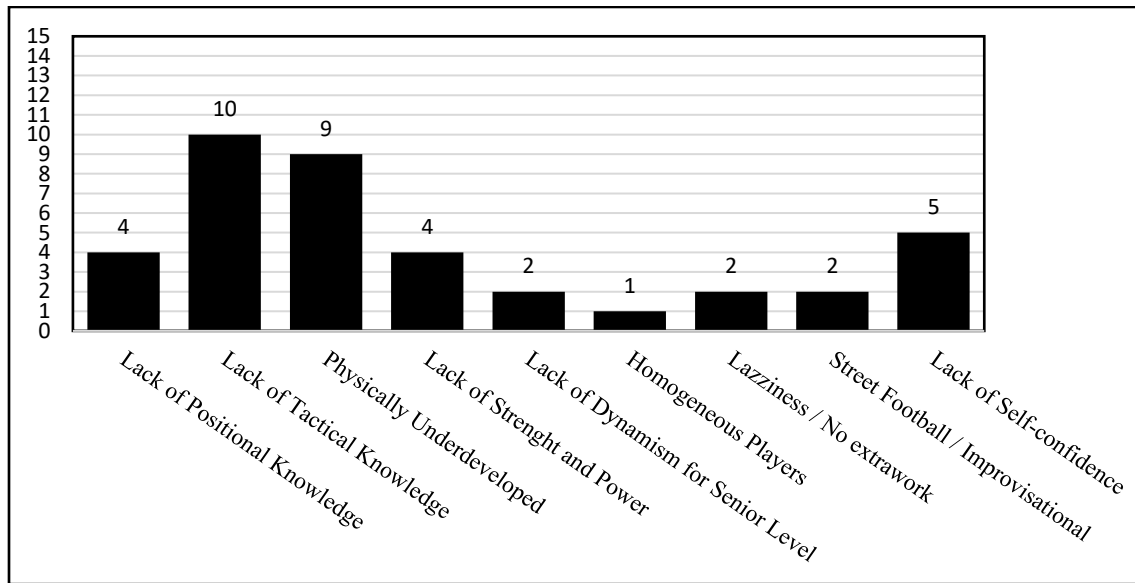
Feedback domain

Three coaches underlined the importance of creating a sense of meaningfulness and belonging inside the club for both the employees and the players. Five coaches believed that financial incentives, such as premium payments on the successful performance of academy, were important motivators that should be provided by the management to the academy staff. The coaches stated that the level of cooperation between the academy and the senior team is crucial for the ultimate success of the academy management. Eleven coaches also underlined the utmost importance of information flow and feedback sharing between the academy and the senior team. Participants viewed the academy and senior team as equally important components of the club system and emphasized the need for well-planned institutional communication and support from the club's management. Otherwise, if there is not any institutional communication policy in the club, this task was left to senior coach's preference and the communication gaps occurred often, as stated by five coaches.

Output domain

According to ten coaches, the main objective of a football academy within a club system should be the development of elite football players physically, technically, tactically and mentally for the senior A team. Moreover, eight coaches referred to a shift in modern football towards the need for versatile players who possess multiple skills. These skills include positional knowledge, game

intelligence, anticipation skills, being a team player, speed and ball-control skills. On the other hand, the coaches also addressed certain issues commonly observed among young players transitioning from Turkish academies to senior teams. The biggest issues are found to be shortcomings in physical development and lack of tactical and positional knowledge. The complete list of most noticed problems among the academy-raised Turkish players are presented in Graphic 2.



Graph 2. Noticed problems among academy-raised players in senior teams

Additionally, the coaches expressed several soft skills they expected from academy-raised players for elite level senior football. Most desired skills were self-confidence ($n = 7$), intelligence ($n = 9$), self-regulation ($n = 10$), work discipline ($n = 9$), intrinsic motivation to play ($n = 5$), dedication to job ($n = 7$), being open to continuous development ($n = 7$), taking responsibility ($n = 5$), cognitive-perceptual skills ($n = 6$), communication skills ($n = 3$), adaptation skills ($n = 5$), resilience ($n = 3$), fair-play and ethics ($n = 2$).

Environment Domain

Various factors were identified as influential in the management of the player development process, including parents, friends, agents, fans, media, girlfriends, other players, and school teachers. Among all, the parents of the player were the most critical factor that may affect the development process ($n = 12$). Hence, coaches proposed an innovative idea and strongly emphasized the inevitable necessity of organizing formal education sessions for the parents of the academy players. Additionally, four coaches remarked that fans could have a negative impact on young players, due to unrealistic expectations, particularly during the transition period from academy to the senior team, therefore the management must protect the young players from the fans and the media if necessary.

Twelve coaches expressed that there are problems caused by football federation in Turkey, which significantly affected the performance of academy management. Eight coaches stated that there was not any defined, nationwide football development system or scientifically approved curriculum to follow in the country and thus the training methodologies are left to individuals' preferences. Six coaches also underlined the insufficient coaching education programs offered by the federation. According to them most of the '*training for trainers*' programs do not go beyond just issuing certificates. Other significant drawbacks were identified as nepotism and political influence in federation's committees and bodies ($n = 3$), lack of competitive league structures for youth ($n = 4$), and lack of strict supervision and inspection on clubs concerning the youth policies ($n = 6$). Accordingly, the participants underlined the importance of organizing better and more educational courses ($n = 7$), having a solid national youth policy and strategy ($n = 7$), providing incentives for academy-friendly clubs ($n = 4$) and exercising coercive power and better controlling on clubs ($n = 6$).

In terms of sports policy, main issues were related to schooling problem of elite athletes and low quality of national education ($n = 7$), which in return, affected professionalism levels of Turkish players and coaches and their communication skills with international football world. Moreover, four participants underlined the lack of public investment in grassroots football activities. Four participants also expressed concerns that public universities lack practical solutions relevant to the football industry. Consequently, they recommended that the government redesign university degree programs to address the practical needs of the sector.

DISCUSSION

Input Domain

The coaches emphasized that academy management should primarily ensure that talent enters the academy system in terms of players, coaches, manager and staff. Regarding the player input, the current approach on the selection of incoming players relies on physical attributes, making it susceptible to the relative age effect trap. Alternative methods such as bio-banding (Cumming et al., 2017) for more fair observations at trial-games or longer-term observation based on data may be implemented in the selection process. The results also showed that personal attributes and soft skills were often disregarded in Turkish academies, leading to detrimental effects on the development process and outcomes in the later stages. This means that football academies need to launch more rigorous scouting departments exclusively for the needs of the academy (Sarmiento et al., 2018). Results also suggested that more focused approaches, targeted at specific regions may yield better results in detection and identification.

The coaches assigned considerable importance to the competence and quality of the academy manager, recognizing his direct influence on the overall management process. This acknowledgement stems from the belief that effective sports management can only be delivered

through the expertise of experienced managerial staff in their respective field (Erdal, 2017). In other words, the manager's quality and competence played a crucial role in shaping the outcomes of the academy and success of the coaches in Turkey.

Apart from the player and manager input, the quality of trainings provided in the academies directly depended on the abilities and expertise of the coaches (Farrow et al., 2013). According to several authors, access to quality coaching has a great effect on athlete's success (Lapiano & Zotos, 2023) and thus it impacts the performance of academy management. A lack of development-specific expert coaching is identified as one of the significant barriers in youth player transition to professional first-team football (McGuigan et al., 2023). Because of this, especially at developmental years, coaches are expected to be qualified, knowledgeable and specialist (Coutinho et al., 2021). In this context, a pedagogical approach and effective communication skills with young players were identified as valuable in academy coaching. It's evident that having specific training knowledge tailored to specific age groups and contexts is a pre-requisite for ideal coaching in the player development process (Armour, 2013; Côté et al., 2013). Therefore, as results suggested, coaching young players in a football academy requires specialized knowledge and expertise due to the specific age and developmental stages of the athletes involved. Consequently, academy coaching should be distinct from senior football coaching, as their areas of focus differ significantly. Academy coaches should specialize in youth coaching on specific age-groups, because it is necessary to have expert coaches who possess the domain-specific knowledge to foster improvement, particularly as athletes advances in elite level (Baker et al., 2003).

In this regard, we originally suggest that the term “academy coaching” should be redefined as “age-group specific academy coaching”, aligned with the targeted age groups of the academy. Instead of a general academy coach, academies should even go further and hire licensed expert coaches for each specific age groups. Football has become a sport where expertise is sought after (Haugaasen et al., 2014). For instance, the knowledge and ability required for an U12 coach would differ significantly from those needed for a U18 coach. Similarly, coaching U19 players would also demand different skills and attributes compared to working with U10 teams. Therefore, providing a specialized education to coaches is important because what may be appropriate for some players may be excessive for others (New & Gill, 2010). This specialization can also be extended to fitness coaches who aspire to work in a football academy, as movement development varies across different age groups and, apparently, bone and muscle growth are different at different ages (Gallahue et al., 2012). The physical needs of a 12-year-old player, for example, differ significantly from those of 19-year-old adult athletes. Expertise in this area is crucial to prevent injuries and stress-related fractures caused by inappropriate training volume and intensity (New & Gill, 2010). Therefore, the academy management must consider these attributes when selecting coaches and staff for the academy. In addition, it is worth highlighting that even though a former playing career may offer certain advantages in coaching, it does not make a significant difference, especially for very young age groups. In fact, it may even be detrimental if the former player lacks pedagogical knowledge and approach. Ideally, an academy coach selected by the academy management should

possess a combination of theoretical and practical lessons in youth development and be able to teach skills within academies (Topkaya, 2015).

To bring more job dedication and professionalism to academy coaches, it's wise to have financial incentives and longer contractual commitments with academy staff including the coaches. Currently, due to unfavourable conditions, academy coaching is often seen as a means to advance to senior team positions, rather than being considered a primary profession (Sunay & Kaya, 2018; Topkaya, 2013). The presence of this kind of organizational injustice inside the club contributes to a lack of commitment and satisfaction (Mohammadi et al., 2016) among individuals working in football academies. As a result, in Turkey, most clubs employ academy coaches on an annual basis and as part-time jobs. This causes a lack of job security, and it impedes coaches from fully dedicating themselves to their roles and institutions, as they remain uncertain about their employment status for the following season. In this context, coach commitment is highlighted as an important factor to create positive athlete-coach relationship (Reverberi et al., 2020) which ultimately determines the quality of the trainings and outcome of the academy. Regarding professionalism problem, some coaches also raised concerns about nepotism within the club's governance, whereby individuals with personal connections were appointed to important academy coaching positions. This is an important issue that requires a contemplating. Because, if the salaries and financial benefits of academy coaches and staff increase without implementing any quality standards and academic requirements, it could potentially create more nepotism problem within the clubs. In other words, simply raising salaries is not an efficient solution, but on the contrary, it would lead to increased nepotism and decreased coaching quality within the academies. Therefore, before considering salary increases, it is crucial to establish transparent and fair recruitment processes within the academies that prioritize merit and academic qualifications. This would ensure that coaching positions are filled based on deserving candidates rather than personal connections.

These findings suggest that there is potential for a strong relationship between the university and the football sector in Turkey. Universities can provide customized programs for former football players who aspire to work as coaches in academies. It may be unrealistic to expect a 35-year-old newly retired player to enrol in a four-year bachelor's degree program in a sports faculty to obtain an academic degree diploma, however, a specially designed academic training program in a university, supervised by professors, and spanning one full academic year, could be an effective solution to equip these experienced but less informed former players with the necessary academic and pedagogical knowledge. To facilitate this process, the Turkish Football Federation could introduce a new regulation requiring a one-year university academic course, as explained above, as a prerequisite for working in football academies. Along with this one-year academic course, the federation could focus on implementing age-specific education courses for the final licensing purposes. In other words, universities could play an active role in providing fundamental scientific education to aspiring coaches, while the federation can concentrate on offering specialized age-specific courses for internal licensing. During this one-year academic coaching course, former players can simultaneously do the internship in the academies. This approach would transform

football academies into structured, controlled, and academically informed internship platforms for newly retired footballers and improve the quality of the workforce in Turkish football.

The present study also revealed that coaches perceived football academies as informal training grounds to develop their coaching skills after their football career. According to Cushion and Jones (2006), coaches' practices often reflect past habits and unconscious processes. To address this issue, clubs should provide extensive and compulsory internal education programs that equip coaches with relevant and up-to-date skills and knowledge (Nesti & Sulley, 2015). This would help them overcome unwanted old habits from their playing years in their coaching careers. In addition to coaching knowledge, coaches need be passionate about self-improvement to keep up with the latest developments in the sector. The upcoming academy players belong to Generation Z or even Generation Alpha, having grown up with the internet and iPads at their fingertips. Therefore, relying on outdated statements such as "It wasn't like this during my playing days" is no longer a valid argument for these new generations. New generation of footballers seek data, measurements, and facts to support the coaches' decisions and the staff's actions. They can easily access different training drills on YouTube, explore the facilities of other academies, and connect with footballers from all around the world online. As a result, coaches, and the academy staff, must be prepared to meet the needs of this new generation. In today's football world, the academies require more than just experienced coaches; they require what we originally refer to as "updated-experienced coaches and staff." Merely having a playing or coaching background is no longer sufficient to effectively develop the next generation of players.

In terms of resources, the coaches emphasized that having modern and suitable facilities and training conditions is essential for the success of coaches. Access to competitive facilities has a great effect on athlete success (Lapiano & Zotos, 2023), contributing to create a positive motivational climate for both players and staff to develop (Moran & Toner, 2017). Contrariwise, lack of accessible sport facilities can be an important institutional barrier to sports participation and athlete development (Hylton, 2013) and most coaches on this study expressed dissatisfaction with the inadequate number of pitches available in their club's academies. This shortage was seen by the participants as a sign of disrespect and negligence towards youth football, which is consistent with the idea that working conditions that fall below acceptable standards can demotivate staff members in the workplace (McGrath & Bates, 2017) and eventually impact the psychological contract between coaches and players within the club. Additionally, it should be noted that one of the important factors determining the quality of learning and development is the motivation of the players (Sivrikaya, 2018). When coaches and players witness the club's negligence towards the academy, their motivation and dedication levels decrease, and this has a negative influence on the overall performance of academy management. Therefore, in addition to having an adequate number of pitches, ensuring access to high-quality training facilities and resources is essential for the comprehensive development of players in football academies (Larsen et al., 2020). The coaches also expressed that it could be advantageous to have academy facilities located on the same site or near the senior team. However, this arrangement was primarily beneficial for higher age groups.

Therefore, it would be recommended that the oldest age group in the academy, which in the Turkish football system is U19, should share facilities with the senior team to take advantage of the associated benefits. Apparently, there is no point of putting U12 team next to senior team training facilities.

Process Domain

The results showed that the trainings conducted in academies lacked challenging and formative aspects. To address this issue, it is crucial to organize academy trainings in more challenging ways that incorporate more formative aspects, enabling players to learn new skills (Mills et al., 2014). Because the importance of quality over quantity in practice is more influential in the development of expert-level skills (Ericsson, 2003). However, currently in traditional training approaches, the players are trained just to be prepared for the next academy game, and individualized sessions are often overlooked in Turkish academies. Therefore, academies must implement individual assessments of the players in the beginning of the season (Beswick, 2016), to identify the specific needs of each player and design customized training programs to facilitate their individual development. In this regard, Turkish academies currently lack visual classroom instructions, theoretical guidance, and individualized training and tailored sessions for each player. Incorporating visual feedback, such as having players review their performances, should be prioritized in academies (Abrahams, 2012).

Furthermore, to enhance the effectiveness of training sessions, the coaches advised that academy football should be organized in a manner where young players, after reaching a certain age group, participate in two games per week. Zibung and Conzelmann (2013) suggested that football requires large quantities of football-specific learning activities and game experiences during childhood to achieve high footballing performance levels at the ages of peak performance. Moreover, hours accumulated in football specific plays and practice during childhood and youth is a strong predictor for perceptual-cognitive expertise in football game (Roca et al., 2012). This insight holds significant implications for the future development of Turkish players, as it is commonly observed that Turkish teams and players struggle to adapt to the demands of two games per week during European club competitions, resulting in a notable decline in performance. This issue is closely linked to Turkish players' lower sporting age compared to their European counterparts, due to the late starting ages for organized football training and matches. Consequently, training ages of young Turkish players are affected negatively, and this issue needs to be addressed by increasing the numbers of annual competitive matches.

In terms of progression to professional football, providing smooth transition paths is considered one of the significant roles of academy management (Relvas et al., 2010). Hence, the academy management should strategically design and implement measures to facilitate a smooth transition from the academy to the highest level of professional football (Gulbin & Weissensteiner, 2013). Effective communication among all relevant parties is vital in successfully navigating the transition process (Mannix et al., 2023). Because of this, transitions should be based on clear and established

institutional rules rather than relying on subjective decisions by head coaches of the senior teams. Because the first-team coaches are evaluated on short-term results and thus their short-term inspired evaluation process on young players blocks long-term thinking and reduces the opportunities for academy players (Balliauw et al., 2022). Chelladurai (2014) confirms that explicit rules and procedures are essential for any effective sports organization to guide and regulate staff behaviour. These important decisions should not be left to mere chance or dependent on the subjective decisions of coaches or staff (McCalman et al., 2023) who are in positions of power at the club during that period. In other words, decisions regarding academy-raised players should be explicit and aligned with the institutional strategy of the clubs on youth players. Hence, the management of the club is responsible for the protection of the club's important assets, including the academy-raised players. Additionally, during youth-to-senior transition period, players must be also provided with the effective mental support (Mitchell et al., 2020) by the clubs, but the reality in Turkey is that the assigned sports psychologists in academies are often too young, inexperienced interns or part-time professionals from outside the football world. Sport psychologists need to move from academic conversations to meaningful interventions (Abrams, 2012). Therefore, even though the service is given in some Turkish academies, the efficacy of this service is highly questionable. Considering that the coaches spend a significant amount of time with the players and have a deeper understanding of their realities, it is also highly recommended that academy coaches be equipped with the fundamentals of sports psychology as well. This concept should also guide future education programs designed for coaches by the Turkish Football Federation.

Concerning progression to professional level, the competence and quality of the head coaches of the A teams play a decisive role as well in the holistic development process of the young players, especially during their transition periods, significantly influencing their future success at the elite level (Coyle, 2009). The coaches in the A team bear a responsibility for the final stage of the development phase of academy-raised player, but in most of the cases, the indispensable role of the A team is overlooked in the academy's development process in Turkish clubs. To become professional footballers, academy players must compete in professional leagues within professional football teams. It is unrealistic to expect young players to develop the mindset and skills of professional footballers while they are exclusively participating in amateur or youth football. The literature further supports the notion that engaging in competition is highly developmental (North et al., 2014), provided it is appropriately managed (Côté et al., 2013). Involvement in A team football is therefore crucial for players to attain tactical and mental maturity, improve game intelligence, boost confidence (Höner et al., 2021) and cultivate a competitive edge. Our study suggested that the A team is, in fact, an integral part of the academy development chain and it is equally responsible, alongside the academy, for the development of players in a club system.

Feedback domain

From a systemic perspective, the lack of communication between the academy and the A team poses a severe problem that can disrupt the chain of the academy management process. Because the consequences of poor communication between academy and the professional team may lead to

misunderstandings among players, coaches and staff (Larsen et al., 2013). In this regard, it's important that clubs must deliberately design their player development policies (Sweeney et al., 2021) and establish comprehensive and direct communication channels for the implementation of youth policies.

Output domain

The results showed that coaches preferred having more complete and versatile players who excel in multiple aspects of the game, as successful outcome of the academies. In addition to technical, tactical and positional knowledge, game-intelligence, anticipation skills, being a team-player, perceptual-cognitive skills are considered as important factors for the development of elite football players in the academies (Machado et al., 2023). The players who are faster (Höner & Votteler, 2016), better at ball control, physically developed and who have self-confidence, commitment and mental toughness (Höner & Feichtinger, 2016) are expected from a football academy; therefore, management can adapt training plans to incorporate these concepts.

Environment domain

The parents of the players emerged as the most influential external factor in the player's development. To mitigate any potential negative impact they might have, it is beneficial that academies organize educational sessions for the parents as well. The player and his parents embark on a very long journey together to be an elite professional footballer, but it is only the player who gets the necessary education in this demanding process. Hence, the parents should also receive relevant mentorship and preparation to navigate the challenges that come with being the parent of a professional footballer.

In terms of the federation's task to improve academy management in Turkey, the present study has highlighted the issue of coaching quality and lack of coaching expertise in Turkey. This is attributed to the lack of sufficient and adequate coaching education available to those who aspire to work in academies as a career choice. The Turkish Football Federation (TFF) is responsible for addressing this matter by organizing relevant education programs aimed at increasing coaching quality and ensuring standardization in coaching and teaching. To address the problem of low coaching quality, the TFF must increase the number of coaching education events. In addition to quantity of these events, the quality of those education events must also be increased. For this aim, the competence and quality of trainers working in the federation's education department should be scrutinized, as they play a crucial role in tuning the quality and effectiveness of those practical education courses. Therefore, the TFF should prioritize the employment of the best educators and experienced expert coaches in Turkey for its education department. In this matter, sports faculties in Turkey and the distinguished academicians should be consulted and employed more often in the TFF trainings. Another immediate task for the federation appears to be the establishment of a clearly defined national curriculum and teaching program, developed under the guidance of academic experts. Lack of access to scientifically developed training programs can be an important institutional

barrier to successful athlete development. This initiative would not only focus on the number of training sessions but also emphasize the type, time and content of training provided in academies.

In the context of educational matters, apart from the issues with TFF's educational programs, there appears to be a broader national education problem. The national quality of education may be an external factor that indirectly affects talent growth and development as a whole (Xiang et al., 2023). For instance, low level of English-speaking skills is not limited to Turkish coaches or players; this issue extends to graduates across various disciplines in Turkey and consequently our workforce in sports naturally remains local, thus, they are unable to utilize international opportunities. Similarly, work ethic, discipline, and intellectual development are not solely shaped within football academies but are also significantly influenced by the national education system. The responsibility for enhancing the nation's education lies with the relevant ministry, therefore, some influential environmental factors effecting player development quality in Turkey are beyond the control of the football academies.

CONCLUSION

Even though coaches are pivotal figures in player development in the academies, their capacities intrinsically tied to managerial decisions, ultimately, it highly depends on the approaches of club's corporate governance. The selection and appointment of coaches, as well as the support and resources provided to them by the club executives, are crucial determinants of their effectiveness and directly impact on player development in the academy. Managerial decisions related to hiring, training, and retaining the coaches eventually influence the level of expertise and developmental approaches within football academies. In summary, it was found that specialized coaching approaches tailored specifically to the age-groups within football academies, employment of expert youth coaches and more challenging and formative training programs in the academy training schemes would enhance the effectiveness of academy management. Moreover, the academies are also highly influenced by the sports environment in the country, which is shaped by the football federation's capacity and capability, as well as the sports policy and culture in the country.

SUGGESTIONS

In addition to the practical suggestions outlined in the discussion section, the study also identifies the domains that influence the overall performance of football academies in Turkey from the perspective of coaches who are currently working in the sector. This domain map may serve as a foundational framework for outlining the essential services and minimum requirements necessary for the effective operational management of football academies in Turkish football system. As evidenced by the findings, the success of an academy is not solely dependent on youth training but rather on the effective management and organization of training programs. Therefore, a broader systems approach should be adopted.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

From a PhD Thesis: Bozkurt, G. (2024). *The management of professional football academies in Turkey: The Managers, coaches and players' perspectives*. Porto: G. Bozkurt. A doctoral thesis in sports science, presented to the Faculty of Sport at the University of Porto.

Ethical Approval:

Ethics Committee: Comissão de Ética da Faculdade de Desporto da Universidade do Porto

Date/Protocol number: 26/04/2024 / CEFADÉ 16-2024

REFERENCES

- Abrahams, D. (2012). *Soccer tough: Simple football psychology techniques to improve your game*. Bennion Keary Limited Publishing.
- Abrams, M. (2012). *Anger management in sport: Understanding and controlling violence athletes*. Human Kinetics.
- Akkoyun, S. (2014). *Türkiye'deki futbol kulüplerinin alt yapılarının yapılanması: Yönetim Biçimleri, idari yapısı ve Avrupa'daki örneklerle kıyaslanması*. Yüksek Lisans Tezi: İstanbul Kültür Üniversitesi, Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.
- Amorose, A. P., & Anderson, M. B. (2007). The influence of the coach on athlete development. In D. Gould, J. R. Williams, & H. A. Ford (Eds.), *Advances in sport psychology* (4th ed.), pp. 335-364). Human Kinetics
- Armour, K. (2013). *Sport Pedagogy: An introduction for teaching and coaching*. Routledge
- Baker, J., Horton, S., Robertson-Wilson, J., & Wall, M. (2003). Nurturing sport expertise: Factors influencing the development of elite athlete. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine* 2, 1-9.
- Balliauw, M., Bosmans, J., & Pauwels, D. (2022). Does the quality of a youth academy impact a football player's market value? *Sport, Business and Management: An International Journal*, 12(3), 269–283. <https://doi.org/10.1108/SBM-02-2021-0011>
- Bardin, L. (2004). *Análise de conteúdo*. 3. ed. Edições
- Beswick, B. (2016). *Odak noktamız futbol: Oyun zihinde nasıl kazanılır?* Remzi Kitabevi.
- Çevik, S., & Onağ, Z. (2019). Qualitative research on reasons why Turkish football clubs are unable to train youth team players well and possible solutions. *CBÜ Beden Eğitimi ve Spor Bilimleri Dergisi*, 14(2), 326-343
- Chelladurai, P. (2014). *Managing organizations for sport and physical activity: A systems perspective* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Côté, J., & Gilbert, W. (2014). Talent is nurtured: Implications for sport policy. *International Journal of Sport Policy and Politics*, 6(4), 575-593
- Côté, J., Erickson, K., & Duffy, P. (2013). Developing the expert performance coach. In D. Farrow, J. Baker, C. MacMahon (Eds.), *Developing elite sport performance: Lesson from theory and practice* (pp. 17-28; 2nd edition). Routledge
- Côté, J., Murphy-Mills, J., & Abernethy, B. (2012). The development of skill in sport. In: Hodges, N., and Williams A.M. (eds) *Skill acquisition in sport: Research, theory and practice* (pp.269–286). Routledge
- Coutinho, P., Ribeiro, J., da Silva, S.M., Fonseca, A.M., and Mesquita, I. (2021). The Influence of Parents, Coaches, and Peers in the Long-Term Development of Highly Skilled and Less Skilled Volleyball Players. *Front. Psychol.*, 12, Article 667542. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.667542>
- Coyle, D. (2009). *The talent code*. Random House.

Bozkurt, G., Dias, C., & Carvalho, M.J. (2025). Management of football academies in Turkey: The Coach perspective. *Eurasian Journal of Sport Sciences and Education*, 7(1), 1-25

Cumming, S. P., Lloyd, R. S., Oliver, J. L., Eisenmann, J. C., & Malina, R. M. (2017). Bio-banding in sport: applications to competition, talent identification, and strength and conditioning of youth athletes. *Strength Condition J.*, 39, 34–47. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1519/SSC.0000000000000281>

Cushion, C. J., Ford, P. R., & Williams, A. M. (2012). Coach behaviors and practice structures in youth soccer: Implications for talent development. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 30(15), 1631–1641

Cushion, C.J., & Jones, R.L. (2006). Power, discourse, and symbolic violence in professional youth soccer: The case of Albion football club. *Sociology of Sport Journal*, 23, 142–161. <https://doi.org/10.1123/ssj.23.2.142>

Erdal, R., (2017). *Sporda Yönetişim & Organizasyon: Spor organizasyonları planlama ve yönetimi*. Spor Yayınevi

Ericsson, K. A. (2003). How the expert performance approach differs from traditional approaches to expertise in sport: In search of a shared theoretical framework for studying expert performance. In K. A. Ericsson & J. Starkes (Eds.), *Expert performance in sport: Advances in research on sport expertise*. (pp. 371–402). Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics

Farrow, D., Baker J., & MacMahon, C. (2013). *Developing sport expertise: Researchers and coaches put theory into practice*. Routledge

Freeman, R. (2010). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Cambridge University Press.

Gallahue, D.L., Ozmun, J.C. and Goodway, J. (2012). *Understanding motor development: Infants, children, adolescents, adults*. McGraw-Hill.

Gulbin, J., Weissensteiner, J., Oldenziel, K., & Gagné, F. (2013). Patterns of performance development in elite athletes. *European Journal of Sport Science*, 13, 605-614. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17461391.2012.756542>

Haugaasen, M., Toering, T., & Jordet, G. (2014). From childhood to senior professional football: A multi-level approach to elite youth football players' engagement in football-specific activities. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 15(4), 336-344. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2014.02.007>

Helsen, W, Hodges, N., J., Van Winckel, & Starkes, J. L. (2000). The roles of talent, physical precocity and practice in the development of soccer expertise. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 18(9), 727-736. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640410050120104>

Höner, O., & Feichtinger, P. (2016). Psychological talent predictors in early adolescence and their empirical relationship with current and future performance in soccer. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 25, 17–26. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psychsport.2016.03.004>

Höner, O., Murr, D., Larkin, P., Schreiner, R. & Leyhr, D. (2021). Nationwide subjective and objective assessments of potential talent predictors in elite youth soccer: An Investigation of prognostic validity in a prospective study. *Front. Sports Active Living*, 3, Article 638227. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.638227>

Houlihan, B., & Green, M. (2008). *Comparative Elite sport development: Systems, structures and public policy*. Elsevier

Hylton, K. (2013). *Sports development: Policy, process and practice*. Routledge.

- Kaplan, T. (2016). *Futbol: Antrenörlük eğitiminde kavramsal boyutlar*. Palet Yayınları
- Lapiano, D. A., & Zotos, C. (2023). *Athletic director's desk reference*. 2nd Revised Edition. Human Kinetics
- Larsen, C., H., Storm, L., Sæther, S., Pyrdol, N., & Henriksen, K. (2020). A world class academy in professional football: The case of Ajax Amsterdam. *Scandinavian Journal of Sport and Exercise Psychology*, 2, 33-43. <https://doi.org/10.7146/sjsep.v2i0.119746>
- Lee, G. (2021). Clarifying the complexities of qualitative research: A Book review of Phillip Adu's a step-by-step guide to qualitative data coding. *The Qualitative Report*, 26(7), 2168-2170. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2021.4947>
- Machado, G., González-Víllora, S., & Teoldo, I. (2023). Selected soccer players are quicker and better decision-makers in elite Brazilian youth academies. *International Journal of Performance Analysis in Sport*, 23(2), 65–82. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24748668.2023.2181609>
- Mannix, P., Roberts, S. J., Enright, K., & Littlewood, M. (2023). Surveying the youth-to-senior transition landscape in Major League Soccer: a new frontier. *Science and Medicine in Football*, 8(4), 365–373. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24733938.2023.2272605>
- McCalman, W., Goddard, S. G., Fransen, J., Crowley-McHattan, Z. J., & Bennett, K. J. M. (2023). Experienced academy soccer coaches' perspectives on players' skilfulness. *Science and Medicine in Football*, 8(4), 386–396. <https://doi.org/10.1080/24733938.2023.2280230>
- McGrath, J., & Bates, B. (2017). *The little book of big management theories and how to use them*. Pearson Business
- McGuigan, M., Dello Iacono, A., McRobert, A., Cowan, D., & Unnithan, V. B. (2024). Facilitators and barriers associated with youth player transition to professional first-team football: A key stakeholder perspective. *International Journal of Sports Science & Coaching*, 19(3), 988-998. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17479541231184022>
- Mesquita, I., Coutinho, P., De Martin-Silva, L., Parente, B., Faria, M. & Afonso, J. (2015). The value of indirect teaching strategies in enhancing student-coaches' learning engagement. *Journal of Sports Science and Medicine*, 14, 657–668.
- Mills, A., Butt, J., Maynard, I., & Harwood, C. (2014). Toward an understanding of optimal development environments within elite English soccer academies. *The Sport Psychologist*, 28(2), 137–150. <https://doi.org/10.1123/tsp.2013-0018>
- Mitchell T., Gledhill A., Nesti M., Richardson D., Littlewood M. (2020). Practitioner perspectives on the barriers associated with youth-to-senior transition in elite youth soccer academy players. *International Sport Coaching Journal*, 7, 273–282. <https://doi.org/10.1123/iscj.2019-0015>
- Mohammadi, S., & Dehkordi, F. (2013). The relationship between job satisfaction and its aspects with the organizational commitment among the staffs of the youth and the sport department in Charmahal & Bakhtiari. *J. Sport Science*, 6(2), 77-81.
- Moran, A., & Toner, J. (2017). *A Critical introduction to sport psychology*. (3rd ed.). Routledge

Bozkurt, G., Dias, C., & Carvalho, M.J. (2025). Management of football academies in Turkey: The Coach perspective. *Eurasian Journal of Sport Sciences and Education*, 7(1), 1-25

Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2017). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal of General Practice*, 24(1), 9-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091>

Nesti, M., & Sulley, C. (2015). *Youth development in football: Lessons from the world's best academies*. Routledge

New, P., & Gill, W. (2010). Academy football: Stressed to the bone. *SportEX Medicine*, 43, 22-27

North, J., Lara-Bercial, S., Morgan, G., & Rongen, F. (2014). The identification of good practice principles to inform player development and coaching in European youth football – UEFA Research Project, Leeds Beckett University, UK.

O'Connor, D., Larkin, P., & Williams, A. M. (2017). Observations of youth football training: How do coaches structure training sessions for player development? *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 36(1), 39–47. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2016.1277034>

Patton, M. (2015). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. 4th ed., SAGE Publications

Poli, R., Ravenel, L., & Besson, R. (2016): *CIES Football Observatory Report n°19* - Retrieved at <https://football-observatory.com/Demographic-study-of-football-in-Europe>

Rabionet, S. E. (2011). How i learned to design and conduct semi-structured interviews: An Ongoing and continuous journey. *The Qualitative Report*, 16(2), 563-566. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2011.1070>

Relvas, H., Littlewood, M., Nesti, M., Gilbourne, D., & Richardson, D. (2010). Organizational structures and working practices in elite European professional football clubs: Understanding the relationship between youth and professional domains. *European Sport Management Quarterly*, 10(2), 165–187. <https://doi.org/10.1080/16184740903559891>

Reverberi, E., D'Angelo, C., Littlewood, M.A., & Gozzoli, C.F. (2020). Youth football players' psychological well-being: The key role of relationships. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11,567776. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.567776>

Roca, A., Williams, A. M., & Ford, P. R. (2012). Developmental activities and the acquisition of superior anticipation and decision making in soccer players. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 30(15), 1643–1652. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02640414.2012.701761>

Roynesdal, O. (2015). *The transition from academy to professional football*. Master Thesis presented in Sport Sciences Department of Coaching and Psychology to Norwegian School of Sport Sciences.

Sarmiento, H., Anguera, M. T., Pereira, A., & Araújo, D. (2018). Talent Identification & Development in Male Football: A Systematic Review. *Sports Medicine*, 48(4), 907-931. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40279-017-0851-7>

Schreier, M. (2014). *Qualitative content analysis*. SAGE Publications.

Şenel, E., & Saygın, Ö. (2021). The comparison of football academy systems between Turkey and England, *International Journal of Sport Culture and Science* 9(4), 387-412

Bozkurt, G., Dias, C., & Carvalho, M.J. (2025). Management of football academies in Turkey: The Coach perspective. *Eurasian Journal of Sport Sciences and Education*, 7(1), 1-25

Sivrikaya, M. H. (2018). The Role of self-efficacy on performance of sports skills of football players. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 6(12a), 75-79. <https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i12a.3952>

Stotlar, D.K. & Wonders, A. (2006). Developing elite athletes: A content analysis of US national governing body system. *International Journal of Applied Sports Sciences*, 18(2), 121-144.

Sunay, H., & Kaya, B. (2018). Türkiye ile Almanya futbol altyapılarının karşılaştırılması. *Sportmetre*, 16(4), 126-139.

Sweeney, L., Horan, D., & MacNamara, Á. (2021). Premature professionalization or early engagement? Examining practise in football player pathways. *Frontiers Sports and Active Living* 3, Article 660167. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fspor.2021.660167>

Topkaya, I. (2015). *Futbolda Altyapı Eğitimi: Altyapıya ilişkin genel bir çerçeve ve altyapı eğitiminde pedagojik yaklaşım*. Paradigma Akademi Yayınları

Veal, A.J., & Darcy, S. (2014). *Research methods in sport studies and sport management: A Practical guide* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Whiting, L. (2008). Semi-structured interviews: Guidance for novice researchers. *Nursing Standard.*, 22, 35-40. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7748/ns2008.02.22.23.35.c6420>

Wylleman, P., Alfermann, D., & Lavallee, D. (2004). Career transitions in sport: European perspectives. *Psychology of Sport and Exercise*, 5(1), 7–20. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1469-0292\(02\)00049-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1469-0292(02)00049-3)

Xiang, C., Dong, W., Kamalden, T. F. T., Ismail, N., & Luo, H. (2024). Structural analysis of environmental factors of sports talent development. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues*, 43(7), 6516–6532. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-023-04803-x>

Zibung, M., & Conzelmann, A. (2013). The role of specialisation in the promotion of young football talents: a person-oriented study. *European J. Sport Science*, 13, 452–460. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17461391.2012.749947>



Except where otherwise noted, this paper is licensed under a **Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International license**.