

The Football Project



by STEFAN AHRENS

Imagine when you were young, all the long school days of sitting and listening to classes. Physical education provided an opportunity to relax, to leave the congested classroom and storm onto the playground to let some steam off. Aside from the fun it provided, sports education is a vital part of a child's development of all sorts of useful skills. However, in Shanghai, especially schools that educate migrant worker's kids face harsh scarcity of resources and are often unable to provide qualified sports teachers to help these kids develop basic movement skills and enjoy some healthy exercise.

In fact, sometimes they can only provide one teacher for 600 kids Or the math teacher delivers sports classes. The consequences of a lack of exercise and physical education are far and wide, as sports can also support the development of intellectual and social skills such as team spirit, tolerance and respect for each other. It is also particularly important from a health point of view, since child obesity is rapidly becoming an issue in China.

With Germany being one of the major football nations in the world and many Germans – even in Shanghai – fervently supporting football, German companies as well as committed professionals from all areas of business teamed up and threw resources together to develop a Football Project that aims to support these schools in delivering qualified sports education with up to date and age appropriate training schedules and methods. After all, football is a true team sport and requires all the basic movement skills many children are lacking.

Financially supported by the companies Kaercher and Kuka, equipped by Adidas and with the know-how supplied by vega sports, the venture was ready to move.

To make it sustainable, Chinese coaches must train Chinese kids. Therefore, an experienced football coach, Thomas Ochs, was hired. Mr. Ochs had previous work experience at Chinese schools and knew what was needed to help these children succeed physically but most of all, with fun! A special curriculum was developed to teach the basic movements while focusing on football.

15 students were chosen from the sports university in Shanghai and they were offered with the tools both theoretical and practical, to educate large groups of children in small spaces, since some schools only have a basketball court to play on. An afternoon football program was created and coached by the trained university volunteer students.





During day time the coach and his Chinese assistant took over regular PE classes at the school, the students trained the children of third grade in the afternoons, always assisted by the German coach to ensure methods are consistent with the values of children's sports education. A very strong team has developed and they have managed to achieve great progress at the 6 schools that participated in this pilot project using their very limited resources.



Through the support of Evonik the football project convinced Borussia Dortmund to send two professionals and three youth coaches for a one day football camp at one of the schools during their China Tour 2016.

The outlook is bright! Two Chinese organizations have joined the project, adding local resources to the portfolio. In the next step the project is targeting another 20 schools to be included into the program, also setting up an intra-school league to offer the kids a possibility to use their acquired skills in a competitive environment. The vision is to include all 200 migrant schools in Shanghai and even move beyond.

A joint training and exchange program between the two German schools in Shanghai and the Chinese schools will start soon and should further enhance Sino-German ties.

To get involved in the football project or to find out more information please contact Mr. Stefan Ahrens via stefanahrens@mac.com