



Carsten Ress & Dr. Klaus Seiberth  
**Summery qualitative evaluation of KICKFAIR's educational approach**  
educational potential and success factors





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## Imprint

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# Introduction

# 1 Introduction

Football fascinates and inspires people around the world. This inspiration motivates projects, programmes, and organisations worldwide to use football as a medium for education and development. Therein lies an understanding that football is not just an immensely appealing game, but that it can also generate diverse opportunities for learning. Football can be a means of conveying fairness and values, practicing cooperation skills, learning how to deal with conflict, or developing a strong identity.

KICKFAIR believes in the educational potential of football. The organisation has been developing educational projects based on football for more than ten years and, in cooperation with local partners (schools, youth institutions, clubs), it implements projects across Germany. KICKFAIR has successfully developed an educational concept for street football projects that is rooted in an understanding of education as a way to empower young people. This includes, first and foremost, the central objectives and methods of KICKFAIR's conceptual approach to education. Secondly, it involves a complex exchange with current scientific discourse about social, informal, and global learning.

This publication is the English summary of a comprehensive evaluation of KICKFAIR's educational approach. The evaluation process was launched in 2009 by KICKFAIR, in cooperation with the Institute for Sport Sciences at the Eberhard Karls University in Tübingen. It was necessary to first develop a unique evaluation design that could review KICKFAIR's approach not only in terms of its sustainability, but also to identify success factors, requirements, and preconditions for meaningful implementation. To accomplish this, we chose a qualitative study design with structured interviews. The primary interviewees were people who had previously participated or currently participate in KICKFAIR's educational projects, in different roles. We focused on conducting biographical interviews with current and former adolescent participants who were asked to give a subjective, retrospective reflection on their participation in the projects and their learning experiences. To validate these assessments from an outside perspective, we also interviewed representatives from schools, youth institutions, and the community who had been a part of the lives of participants over a longer time period.



**Summery**

## 2 Summary

The central task of KICKFAIR's educational approach is to strengthen the personal development of children and adolescents who are educationally disadvantaged, and to support them in creating positive perspectives on life. The aim is to provide multiple structures and opportunities for learning through street football. Young people should have the chance to develop skills that will prepare them for a successful transition from school into further training or work. Alongside individual support, KICKFAIR provides a foundation on which to build values and learn respect. The approach is also situated in a broader, global context. Young people gain awareness of how to think and act in an increasingly complex society that is characterised by globalisation processes. Promoting participation, engagement, and responsibility is a core interest, both in terms of their own communities, as well as in global relations.

Our primary objective in the evaluation was to analyse how participants, teachers, and supervisors perceive the educational potential and success factors of KICKFAIR projects. We also studied requirements and preconditions, allowing the approach to be presented to implementers and to suggest recommendations for future development. We chose a qualitative study design for the evaluation, with structured interviews. There were a total of 18 interviews with young people, teachers, school directors, and leaders from the community and municipal youth work. The main target group for the evaluation was current and former participants between the ages of 17 and 25 years. In an open approach, we asked 10 former students from Germany's lowest level of secondary school to detail their experiences and their personal development throughout the projects. These reflections echo the educational potential of KICKFAIR projects, as well as their lasting effects on participating young people. To complement these reflections, we conducted another eight interviews with leaders from schools (management and teachers), youth social work, and the community. They were people who had been part of participants' lives over a prolonged period of time during their development.

### **KICKFAIR's approach offers diverse opportunities for development**

Overall, the interviewees acknowledged the variety of educational opportunities that KICKFAIR's approach provides, especially with regard to groups of socially and educationally disadvantaged young people. KICKFAIR successfully uses the appeal of football as a means to stimulate learning and education. Projects create structures of opportunity within which young people are able to grow and develop through social and global learning. Learning begins with the unique method of playing street football, in which referees are forgone in order to focus on shared experience and fair

treatment of others. This framework creates space for dialogue in which young people communicate with one another about the principle of fairness in sport, together agreeing upon rules for playing.

This type of playing lends itself to social interaction that fosters basic experiences of social learning. It opens up further opportunities for education that are rooted in experience and action. KICKFAIR projects are designed and organised to showcase street football as a peer-to-peer approach, created by and for young people. Participants plan and organise street football events in teams and run them on their own. They assume the roles of team leaders during matches and assist players in a dialogue about fair rules. They support them in evaluating matches and successfully mediate any conflicts that arise. As mentors, they pass on these experiences to those younger than themselves. In each of these roles, young people are able to develop and improve their skills, which include social, personal, and strategic competencies. There is a special emphasis on skills in the areas of communication and conflict management, organisation and problem solving, and self-efficacy.

**Thomas**  
participant  
Z 138-155

*“Before it always seemed as if I was standing in front of a wall and couldn’t climb it because there was just too much and I didn’t have anything that I can grab on to. And then came our counsellors, for example, and they said now you take over the program and see what you can do...and then you just have to put one stone on top of another...that’s also something that you’ll need later in life...so that you don’t just stand there in the face of challenges and surrender to them, but that you slowly and carefully start to build up the wall.”*

**Stefan**  
participant  
Z 188-204

*“You have to go up on stage and explain the project. And it was then that I said I don’t know if I can do it... speak in front of so many people...then the evening arrived and I did it. Of course I was nervous and everything. I was onstage for the first time – completely alone – and that was really a huge sense of achievement.”*

Developing these types of skills is part of the “normal” psychosocial development of young people. In order to develop “normally” however, they need specific opportunities to learn. Not everyone has these sorts of learning and experiential opportunities; in particular, young people who are socially disadvantaged often lack these spaces where they can develop necessary life skills.

This is why young people who are underprivileged in education are underrepresented in the area of volunteer work, which also offers a high degree of informal education and skill development. An additional disadvantage is their experience in the lower level of secondary education (Hauptschule in German), which often carries social stigma. This gives many of them a sense of hopelessness and a lack of confidence in their own abilities. KICKFAIR’s approach seeks to reduce this discrimination, particularly by

offering opportunities in the area of informal education, and opening new pathways to learning for these young people.

*“No child wants to be put in the low level secondary school stream after the fourth grade. And you’re told you’re dumb in primary school from other students – you become dumb, you can’t do anything, and no one wants to voluntarily go to the low level school...even by society, you’re not given the courage to think that you can do something... and through KICKFAIR, everything switched directions. I got the sense that I can do things. And I got the feeling that I can, I am, I am more than just my school...and I had a responsibility, and I could decide and achieve things with others, and that was something completely new and different. And suddenly people also looked at me differently. And that is a totally different feeling, when you understand that yes, you can do something.”*

**Elena** participant  
Z 244-259

The lasting effects of these educational opportunities are also very apparent in periods of transition. All interviewees who had completed the transition from secondary school into further education, training, or work indicated that their participation in KICKFAIR projects had a significant effect on ensuring this transition was successful.

*“And that motivated me a bit to say, OK, I can do something...if I can do this many things, then I can definitely complete the next level of school. And then I said, OK, I’ve done vocational training and surely I can get into technical college. And then I said, Yeah, if I’ve already come this far, then I can definitely go on to study further, and now it’s happening. But I don’t think any of that would’ve happened if I didn’t have the feeling at some point that I can create an effect. I can do it.”*

**Elena** participant  
Z 197-211

Of central importance here seems to be gaining positive self-efficacy. By experiencing repeated situations of success, young people can transform their original feelings of hopelessness into generally positive attitudes, therefore gaining new confidence that they can achieve things in life.

*“During a group conversation there was, for example, the task of sitting with five people – five other applicants at the table – and you had to solve a problem. Before, I definitely would’ve just sat down and waited until someone else said something or started it off. And there we were, the task was clear, and then I sort of said, at the point where we’re intimidated, ‘Hey, how much time do we have?’” and then sort of took over the leadership role. And that was sort of the step that I think later got me the job or the apprenticeship spot because you just have to say something, you just go for it, nothing will happen – just do it. And that’s just the fear or the inhibitions that take you over and, bottom line is, I trace that completely back to the project because I don’t do anything less in the project.”*

**Christoph**  
Z 494-510

Three participants who were formerly students in Germany's lowest level of schooling went on to successfully pursue a university level degree. They attribute this directly to their personal development resulting from the projects, which is very encouraging for KICKFAIR and its local partners.

**Ralf Vogt**  
school principle  
Z 75-81

*“When you speak with former participants, these things that happened are rooted, and I think that one or more gained a certain structure for how they find their life, their spot in education or training. The thing is sustainable and they take responsibility for themselves and just take some things into their own hands, which is something that a few years before surely wouldn't have been the case.”*

Another aspect that shows the effectiveness of KICKFAIR's approach can be found in the changes in attitudes and behaviours of participants. According to the evaluation, KICKFAIR's method of playing street football harnesses the potential of sport to convey values and promote respectful coexistence. Young people have the chance to practice fair, respectful, and conflict-mediated behaviour while playing the street football match, or in the role of a team leader.

**Michael**  
participant  
Z 361-367

*“Yeah, you take something away from it. You feel somehow obligated to intervene when you see someone fighting, and not just to say, I'll just walk on by.”*

**Elena**  
participant  
Z 66-74

*“You learn first of all to observe a lot, not to judge, but just to be neutral, to lead conversations with people...you learn empathy, you have to concern yourself with people, or with groups, and with how they are, why they're maybe a bit short-tempered at some point...you just have to learn a lot of social skills and they improve throughout. It's not as easy as it seems sometimes.”*

Simultaneously, young people are able to build a foundational system of values based on these experiences, which also determines their behaviour in daily life. Respectful interactions with elderly people or the ability to intervene in conflicts in daily life are concrete examples of these changes in attitudes or behaviours.

**Thomas**  
participant  
Z 117-125

*“You learn something human here, something that really brings you further in life. I mean, I don't know, if I walk down the street, for example, and – just something mundane – there are a lot of people, who don't help old ladies onto the train, for example, or hold the train...this consideration is something that I learnt along the way, or respectful interaction with one another and that type of thing. That starts with football and continues on to helping old ladies on the train.”*

We have also found positive effects on the atmosphere at school, as well as improvements in relationships between students and teachers.

*“Yeah, it starts on the court, on the football pitch. Then it goes on and you realise that the format of a tournament follows up in your daily life at school – which I described before.” (...) “You also notice it in a respectful atmosphere at school, and that of course continues in other contexts where young people are. You notice whether that’s how it is in their families or in other free time contexts, and that’s how a community is shaped.”*

**Robert Kraus**  
managing director of cumminity youth work  
Z 80-87

### The local and the global as key elements

KICKFAIR expands learning opportunities from the local to the global by connecting projects in an international network of partner organisations. Through international partnerships and meetings, young people do not only grow personally, but also have the opportunity to design global collaboration and experience diversity as a form of enrichment. Street football plays a central role in global networking, serving as an emotional medium of connection and as a jumping off point. KICKFAIR’s method of playing fosters strong identities, but also opens up a space for exchanging experiences between young people as the leaders of street football projects. This is a central and concrete opportunity for exchange, allowing participants to learn with and from one another.

*“Yeah, it’s street football, I would say, that’s the first level of coming together. That’s the core. And then you establish a lot of common ground that you didn’t have or know before. That’s what you work out of an exchange.”*

**Thomas**  
participant  
Z 662-665

Participants from KICKFAIR’s partner organisations in different countries are equally able to share and contribute their experiences and knowledge of work with street football. The setting permits concrete ways to connect and transfer global knowledge that has been learnt from implementing local projects. The awareness of being part of a “greater whole” by being involved with street football is highly motivational for young people and has positive effects on their local projects.

*“The fact that we both have the same goal, even though we’re so far apart from one another and live on different continents – that was a pretty awesome experience that never stopped motivating me. If I say, yeah, that’s cool if we have a project like that here, and there they have a project, then you have to do it – then you can really achieve a lot.”*

**Stefan**  
participant  
Z 81-85

Global networking and shared international projects with long-term learning partnerships create opportunities for young people to further develop their global capacity-building skills. This includes not only the application of general capacity-building skills in global settings, but also a number of other skills that can be developed within a global framework. Examples include an ability to recognise potential for synergy between different methods and perspectives, or an ability to reflect on cultural differences. The uniqueness of KICKFAIR's educational approach lies precisely in the connection between the global and the local. This prerequisite ensures a global network of partners, project leaders, and organisations. The shared medium of street football fosters strong identities, creates collaborative content, offers a shared space for global exchange, and provides possibilities for the application of global learning to local contexts. This also requires an ability to keep in mind specific individual contexts and cultural backgrounds.

**Thomas**  
participant  
Z 689-692

*"You get a lot of experiences that you can apply to the bigger picture at home, and then you approach things differently and just a lot, yes a lot, more openly. And then more creative ideas come out of it."*

**Elena**  
participant  
Z 441-444

*"It's like now I'm always excited about someone coming here, where I think, oh, now someone else is here. Totally exciting and interesting; how do they do it there, what are new things, can we do something better in our project. And there are always a thousand ideas when someone's here."*

### Global learning as entitlement

In addition to developing capacity-building skills, global networking also addresses more specific aspects of global learning. Young people in Germany experiencing this global exchange (who often come from different cultural backgrounds themselves) engage in a critical discussion on hierarchies in relationships with partner countries. Questions arise about stereotypes, different concepts of the world, asymmetrical perspectives – "we are the rich, you are the poor" – and often a one-directional eagerness to help. Gaining insights into the respective lives of young people from partner countries gives young people a more complex understanding of their social realities. They can unpack their fixed understandings of countries and formulate new interpretations.

**Michael**  
participant  
Z 282-285

*"It was absolutely on the same level...you didn't feel like something different, or something better, in no way, because then I would be in the wrong project."*

*“Before we were kind of averse to them, as it were, saying things like, look at what they’re wearing or what they look like, or whatever else... how ugly they look, we always said that, too...I felt really ashamed that I said stuff like that.”*

**Cemal**  
participant  
Z 517-524

*“The remarkable thing is maybe that we in Germany or in Europe only see ourselves as experts and nothing more, and that we do everything right and we just have to help others. Rather, we can just leave it sometimes and allow others to help us.”*

**Elena**  
participant  
Z 408-410

Results found that the global learning aspect of KICKFAIR’s educational approach also produces positive effects in terms of developing an open-minded disposition. Experiences with international learning partners promote a constructive understanding of foreignness. The interviewees confirmed that they and other participants interacted respectfully and openly not only with people from other countries, but also with people coming from backgrounds of migration who live in their own communities. Developing open attitudes to concepts of foreignness quite clearly changed their perceptions of cultural diversity in their own surroundings for the better. Thus, KICKFAIR’s approach also provides potential to be integrated into individual local contexts.

*“Yeah, that’s how it is now in my private life. For example, if you’re out, everyone has different prejudices. It doesn’t matter if it’s us Germans to Turks or others or vice versa...that was also a moment where it became clear to me, hey, you don’t know people at all...and you don’t know at all what makes them tick, you just automatically have a bad image of them. Just because they look strange or, just for an example, they wear different clothing than you or something like that, just like it was in school, for example. But that was mind-blowing, to just say, hey, just do whatever you want. Who cares what they look like, or where they come from, or what language they speak, or...and that was the ‘aha moment’ in my adolescence, where it clicked. And then it was just nonsense. And that was actually such a true experience at the time.”*

**Christoph**  
participant  
Z 344-355

*“Before I always thought about foreign cultures, like, does it really have to be like that? That’s where you’re more into your Germanness. But now, my circle of friends is getting pretty multicultural. Pretty much completely. And now those things...I mean, before I would’ve thought, nah. But precisely because of all the prejudices there are. Things like that just happen.”*

**Katrin**  
participant  
Z 207-211

KICKFAIR's approach successfully provides an entry point to global learning and international experience to a target group that otherwise would not normally be part of international exchange programs, or would be underrepresented in them.

**Robert Kraus**  
managing director of cummunity youth work  
Z 161-169

*"This is a method that also lends itself in an extremely good way to – what I would call – the educationally disadvantaged milieu. And up until now, they've understood the trend towards globalisation as a threat."*

Global networking sparks an interest in young people and sensitivity towards other countries. It raises questions of cooperative development, global dependencies, and international issues such as poverty, social inequality, or environmental problems. Participants are also able to relate these issues to their own lives.

**Michael**  
participant  
Z 338-343

*"You listen more if you hear, yeah in South America such and such. If you've been there, you also feel a little more connected to it. You understand global issues a bit more and are more interested in them if you've seen it."*

**Stefan**  
participant  
Z 541-550

*"It's always like if you see on TV that somewhere in the world there's a lack of water, then it hits you for a second, and you think about it, but it doesn't stay with you long. And if you're somewhere, seeing it with your own eyes, and you think of how good you actually have it, that's what sticks with you."*

Young people are encouraged to reflect on how their individual actions can create a just and sustainable global society. In particular, this includes critical thinking about consumption and purchasing, as well as changes in their behaviours, such as more conservative use of resources or consciously thinking about the conditions for creating a product before buying it.

**Elena**  
participant  
Z 727-744

*"I really watch out for things where I know that they – where other people are exploited, I try to steer clear. Unfortunately, you can't completely avoid it because you don't always know what's behind it."*

At the same time, however, an approach like this can also result in resignation to the complexity of structures of inequality in the environments of young people; their behavioural changes can weaken again over time. It is clear that if learning processes in international partnerships are continual and opportunities for reflection are consistently available, there will be a stronger likelihood that discussions about global responsibility will continue. Therefore we suggest that future project leaders more strongly encourage reflection among participants in order to maintain their awareness and ensure their interest in the global society and motivation to change do not fade. Leaders should more strongly address possibilities in the local

contexts of young people to ensure that they truly absorb lessons learnt from partnerships and that they continue to think about their actions. There appears to be particularly strong potential in having international youth leaders from KICKFAIR partner organisations carry out workshops and meeting days at partner schools and institutions in Germany. By introducing global subject matter, messages can be conveyed and addresses authentically. This is also how organisations can reach a large number of young people within financial limitations.

*“He was often at the school and he talked a lot about himself, and they were totally – yeah, I don’t think history class was ever as interesting for them as at that point in time. No one spoke. Everyone was silent. And they all listened really eagerly and thought it was fascinating because, if I had told them about the genocide, it would never have been like that, like listening to someone who was there.”*

**Elena**  
participant  
Z 697-702

### KICKFAIR’s educational approach: factors and requirements for success

To conclude, we have also established factors for success and some requirements for future implementers of KICKFAIR’s educational approach. A foundational requirement for successful implementation is to have local implementing structures (schools, youth institutions, etc.) in place. Responsible supervisors must share KICKFAIR’s basic understanding of education. There are certain requirements for supervisors in implementing this particular approach to empowering young people. Their primary task is to create opportunities for young people to take personal responsibility and to design self-determined and shared projects. Furthermore, supervisors must seek to maintain and institutionalise these opportunities.

*“And when you see a young person, or a young adult, how he stands there and leads his tournament or makes music, which he proudly gets up at six in the morning to do, that to me is something unfamiliar and I find it really amazing.”*

**Andreas Bender**  
teacher  
Z 126-129

Conveying responsibility and cooperation means having participants develop trust in their own skills. They should form an ability to deal with the dynamic processes of project work, which may not always be planned and might include experiences of failure. Successful implementation of experiential learning is dependent on whether participants are able to continuously reflect on their actions. These reflections are made possible through further development of project work and allowing time to process negative experiences. On one hand, this requires the production of opportunities for reflection. On the other hand, it also depends on the readiness of supervisors to engage with any ideas for improvement put forth by participants for developing the project further (this also includes, of course, analysing ideas in terms of feasibility). Generally, it is also important to

keep in mind the risk of overwhelming participants or exacerbating their negative personal expectations. This is important when working with socially disadvantaged young people, who often lack confidence in their own abilities. In particular, participants taking on the roles of conflict mediators can encounter difficult situations. These situations hold strong potential for learning, but can also produce feelings of being overwhelmed. By assigning tasks that are manageable, responsibilities can expand gradually, and support can be put towards a forming a constructive way of overcoming negative experiences. Integrating this into the approach is a way to lessen the risk of participants feeling overwhelmed or stressed. Supervisors must be in the position to recognise these feelings among participants and provide the appropriate support.

Another aspect of the approach that creates an opportunity to learn is networking with the community for projects. The public organisation and anchoring of a project in a particular community can empower young people by introducing “serious situations” outside of a school context. Through public perception and appreciation, participants experience the relevance of their learning in society.

**Ralf Vogt**  
school principle  
Z 173-178

*“I think it’s very important for them to be able to present themselves and to show what they’ve got going on...and it’s good to do this outside of school...they go to open spaces and it’s important for them to show what they’ve learnt and what they can do.”*

Experiential learning, in which young people act independently and responsibly, calls on supervisors and teachers to take on roles that are contradictory to those in traditional classroom settings. As participants gain different understandings of their actions, teachers and supervisors also become learners. Participants are often not used to having their strengths and talents as the point of focus. This is why they often find experiential learning challenging and must find a way to trust themselves in what they are doing. Supervisors must learn how to hold back and to allow certain freedoms but, at the same time, they are required to be companions and supporters in the learning process. Genuine participation and serious responsibility is an intensive effort that requires support and takes time.

Therein lies a final aspect that is required for the successful implementation of KICKFAIR’s approach. If young people who lack educational opportunities are to strengthen their personal development and build sustainable, positive outlooks on life, this process does not occur overnight. It takes much more of a long-term outlook with regular occasions and opportunities in which they can gradually build confidence in their individual skills, assume more responsibilities, discover their strengths, and thereby develop future prospects.

*“To me, long-term development means that you have a monthly or weekly presence in what’s happening. And then a child or a student from these types of lower-level schools can really develop in a project like this. Stories every so often are nice, and are also important, but for long-term development where I can say something changed, the most important thing is continuity.”*

**Andreas Bender**  
school principle  
Z 301-307

*“Each role fit to my current stage of life back then...I keep discovering new roles or slipping into new roles and that’s actually what’s exciting.”*

**Elena**  
participant  
Z 154-162

With this in mind, the point of KICKFAIR’s approach is not simply to implement a street football project over a fixed period of time, like over one school year, for example, but rather to integrate the approach into the identity and educational conceptualisation of the host school or institution. This long-term aspect is equally important in anchoring the meaning of the educational approach. Particularly in a school setting, institutional change is required to allow for a shift from traditional or formal understandings of education towards the possibility of a more informal and process-oriented approach to learning. Not only does the transformation of structural frameworks play a role, but also the awareness and appropriate training of teachers. It is only on this foundational understanding of education that opportunities for development and sustainable effects will be possible.

**figure 1**  
review of the key  
findings

<p><b>KICKFAIR's educational approach offers diverse opportunities for development</b></p>	<p><b>The local and the global are key elements</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach supports young people in taking responsibility for themselves and others</li> <li>• The approach promotes confidence building in personal skills, thereby providing positive changes to educational and professional paths</li> <li>• The approach promotes fair and respectful behaviour and facilitates this behaviour in daily life</li> <li>• The approach encourages the development of important skills, such as social and personal skills, and strategic actions</li> <li>• The approach provides new opportunities for learning to young people who are particularly educationally disadvantaged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Local project work is always embedded within a global context through the international network of partners</li> <li>• This global dimension gives a positive boost to motivation and identification with local projects</li> <li>• In this way, local opportunities for education can form global connections</li> <li>• Projects enable both learning from and with each other, as well as an international exchange of experiences and knowledge</li> <li>• Project work contributes to the development of global skills</li> <li>• A combination of local and global networking creates learning opportunities in which diversity is experienced as enrichment</li> </ul>
<p><b>Global learning as entitlement</b></p>	<p><b>Factors and requirements for success</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The approach is particularly suited to creating awareness of global interconnectedness</li> <li>• Global learning opportunities enable the breaking down of stereotypes and level the playing field for international exchanges</li> <li>• The approach encourages both reflection on individual actions and responsibility in a global society</li> <li>• Global learning provides opportunities to recognise similarities and to practice a constructive understanding of foreignness, difference, and diversity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• KICKFAIR's educational approach is a central prerequisite for successful project work</li> <li>• Teachers and supervisors must become supporters in learning</li> <li>• Projects produce positive results if there is freedom for self-determined action</li> <li>• A requirement of successful project work is regular reflection on the learning experiences of participants</li> <li>• A challenge is the prevention of feelings of stress or participants feeling overwhelmed</li> <li>• Sustainable projects and educational work require long periods of time</li> </ul>







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