

DISSERTATION PAPER REVIEW on the topic
"FOOTBALL PR AND ITS ROLE FOR THE FORMATION OF MEDIA
LITERACY"
PRESENTED FOR A PUBLIC DEFENCE
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(MEDIA PEDAGOGY)

The presented dissertation enters a field that has so far remained outside the critical view of researchers and analysts. This is the main reason why I welcome my colleague Dimitar Penev - both for the courage to jump into the unknown, and for the depth he is trying to reach through the presented academic research. The very career development of Dimitar Penev, which for more than a decade has been related to sports journalism, and football PR, obviously determines the choice of this topic, while also shaping the research approach he has chosen. As for the other reasons motivating my interest in the proposed work, they are related to the specific narrative of the author, who is able to present complex ideas and concepts through a clearly understandable, logical and indeed quite a readable style. The paper zooms into issues related to the socio-psychological, emotional and informational potential of football and football

PR, and their influence on both individual and social level. Thus, the paper presents a very effective combination of personal, corporate and political interest with the public one, projecting in this way PR theory and practices in the field of media communication and media literacy. Hence, the research inevitably enters the field of media pedagogy as a science dealing with the possibilities of using media for the purposes of upbringing, socialization, education and overall upward development. Or as our colleague Penev claims in chapter 1, 1.1. Essence of the problem, "the work presented seeks to find an intersection between the functions and meaning of football PR and the possibilities of forming media literacy". In his words, "Bulgarian football is at a crossroads and a change is imperative not only in its organization and management at a sports-technical level, but also in optimizing its relations with the public space through the role of football experts and the media in the context of media literacy formation ". Formulating the justification of the goals and tasks of the present work, the author uses a definition of the concept of "media literacy", which he rightly defines as "a set of technical skills for accessing, analyzing, evaluating and creating and distributing content"...and also "a type of educational approach based on critical thinking and the use of media", as well as "an attitude for increased civic activity". This, in my opinion, is essential, because in this way our colleague Dimitar Penev precisely and clearly justifies the positioning of his work in the field of 1.2 Pedagogy (Media pedagogy).

The presented work, with a volume exceeding 150 pages, is structured in an introduction, four main chapters, a final part with conclusions, a football PR handbook, references and appendices. It includes one figure showing the schematic parameters of the study (section 1.4), nine tables and 26 diagrams, all of which give a higher illustrative value to the proposed dissertation.

The **introduction** clearly presents the essence of the research by setting its main directions, and at the same time presupposes interest and desire for further familiarization with the specifics of the theoretical and practical dimensions of this analysis.

Chapter 1 presents the program orientation of the dissertation work, motivates its importance, makes a detailed terminological justification of the problem, defining the object and subject of the research. It also offers the very hypothesis of the research which claims that there is interdependence between the professional-sports, social and financial-economic positions of the football structures, presented as club policies, and the way of reflecting their image in the public space, something which provokes positives/negatives by placing the public image of football entities in direct dependence on the degree of development of their media literacy". A hypothesis that I accept as appropriate, directly supporting the formulation of the very goals and objectives of the research.

Chapter 2 provides a comprehensive theoretical analysis of the researched area. I like the way our colleague Dimitar Penev regards soccer as a sport " as a kind of unique communication

medium. I really like his reflections on football and business relations, as well as those on football clubs and the public sphere. In other words, there is an analysis that, for me, helps effectively to understand the context in which media literacy is researched. I find the presentation of the public image of celebrities, including football players, as going far beyond the family, and in this sense, I find very relevant the examples about various football players and coaches as the result of a particular type of PR practices. Towards the end of this chapter, where the different models of communication are examined, I believe, however, that the used theoretical classifications should be applied to the given examples - Blagoi Georgiev, Valeri Bozhinov, Lotar Mateus, etc. - in order to see more clearly the practical meaning of these ideas and more precisely how they influence the shaping of the public image of the mentioned subjects, in direct relation to the level of their media literacy/illiteracy.

Chapter 3, entitled "Methodological and organizational parameters of the research", I believe that it very well describes the specifics of the methods used in the present work - analysis of literary sources, surveying, interviewing and observing the reactions of different groups of subjects, with a direct connection to football, as well as the relationship of these methods to the specific tasks set in this paper. Regarding the organization of the research itself - I accept the quantity and quality of the sample - sports journalists, experts, former and current football players, as well as their wives, fans, club owners - as sufficient and representative.

Chapter 4 makes a detailed analysis of the research results related to:

- the possibilities to change the image of football
- the notions of the actuality and performances of the football players
- the current requirements for football experts
- the problems and difficulties at work
- the ideas about the attitude towards football experts
- the ideas about the current qualities of football PR
- the idea of the near future of football PR.

As a reader, I find this critical analysis very entertaining, rich and relevant. In places here I am somewhat missing the connection of the considered parameters with media literacy. It seems to me that with respect to each individual parameter studied, this relationship follows consequently and can/should be accounted for.

The **final part** summarizes the essence of the work in a clear and logically motivated way. The conclusions are correct, well defined, in direct connection with the set (and completed) goals and objectives.

I am not sure of the accuracy of the statement "football has the property of PR", at least not when this statement is made within the framework of an academic paper. It seems to me that a statement is needed here, related more to the relationship between media literacy and the effective football PR. As for the attached handbook aimed at football PR professionals, I think it is a fitting finale to the development, but I feel that as an integral part of it, the handbook should be

cleared of 'buzz' words and expressions such as 'important to know' .."it is necessary to proceed"..."you know", "let's not forget" etc., perfectly acceptable for a piece of journalism, but at the same time - in my opinion – somehow outside the standards of an academic analysis.

I accept the reported contributions - a systematic analysis of the football as a phenomenon, definition of concepts with an orientation towards media pedagogy, the proposed tested methodology for researching different target groups regarding their media literacy - I find them to be clearly stated and appropriately distinguished. However, I think that the part with publications on the subject should be removed from the dissertation. I find them more suitable for the auto-reference, which for me fully corresponds to the dissertation.

As for the attached bibliography, there is a list of over a hundred titles, combining purely academic sources with those which are oriented to a broader audience. This combination speaks of the seriousness and thoroughness of the author in his endeavor to explore in various directions the multifaceted nature of the researched issues.

In the end, I will point out that there is an innovative, interesting and in-depth analysis, the merits of which speak eloquently for the authorship of the presented dissertation paper (cf. plagiarism check report), which shows excellent indicators.

Based on everything stated above, I would like to express my support for the work presented, for which I vote positively. For this reason, I propose to my colleagues, members of the

scientific jury, that Dimitar Radoslavov Penev be awarded the educational and scientific degree "doctor" in the field 1.2 PEDAGOGY (MEDIA PEDAGOGY).

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Prof. Danail Danov PhD & D. Litt.