

Impact case study (REF3b)

Institution: University of Glasgow
Unit of Assessment: D36 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management
Title of case study: Developing vocational skills and strategic knowledge across European national football leagues
1. Summary of the impact

University of Glasgow research into public relations, sport and journalism has directly shaped the professional development programme run by UEFA (Union of European Football Associations) and the Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration at the University of Lausanne. The Diploma in Football Management is aimed at managers working in the 54 member nation football associations across Europe. The research underpins the Public Relations and Media Operations module delivered through this blended e-learning programme that helps participants enhance and increase their knowledge of the organisational management of public and media relations in the football industry.

2. Underpinning research

Over the last decade, Raymond Boyle (Professor of Communications, August 2010-present) has established an international reputation as a leading research scholar in the area of media and sports culture, focusing on the relationship between sports, journalism and public relations. More recently, his research has been centred on the impact of social and digital media on relationships between sports, governing bodies and their various stakeholders. The research has always been empirically grounded, and draws on extensive industry and professional interviews as well as participant observation. The research has involved sit down interviews with a wide range of professional practitioners working across journalism, public relations and the sports industry. These have included senior managers responsible for sport and communications at media organisations such as the BBC, Channel 4 and *The Times* and football clubs such as Manchester United and Celtic. It has also involved the development of original case studies involving PR activity and sports organisations.

Key research findings include:

- 1) Communication managers recognising aspects of continuity in the sports-media relationship, as well as documenting elements of these relationships as they change (for example, the strategic importance television still plays in shaping media sports policy);
- 2) Providing a detailed account of the developing strategic thinking required by media managers working within sporting national associations as they attempt to integrate social media into their existing communication strategies and organisational structures;
- 3) Identifying the key risks and challenges faced by public relations managers of new patterns of media consumption and distribution among their key stakeholders and the media;
- 4) Analysing and documenting the impact that the changing professional practice of sports journalists has on their role as cultural intermediaries between national organisations and stakeholders, and how this shapes communication strategies of governing bodies of sport (and football in particular).

The specific work discussed here has emerged since 2010, with its focus on social media and organisational change. In 2013 Boyle was invited to create additional content based on his

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research for the Communications and Public Relations module, which will form part of the UEFA Certificate in Football Management, and rolled out across national associations from 2014.

3. References to the research

- Boyle, R. (2012) 'Social Media Sport: Journalism, Public relations and Sport', in Krovel, R. and Roksvold, T. (eds.) *Mediated Fan Culture*, Oslo: Nordicom. pp. 45-62. ISBN 9789186523350 [available from HEI]
- Boyle, R and Haynes, R. (2011) 'Sport, the Media and Strategic Communications Management', in Trenberth, L. and Hassan, D. (eds.) *Managing Sport Business*, London: Routledge. ISBN-10: 0415570298 | ISBN-13: 978-0415570299 [available from HEI]
- Boyle, R. (2010) 'Sport and the media in the UK: The Long Revolution?', *Sport in Society*, Vol. 13. No 9. November, 1298-1311.[REF2]

4. Details of the impact

In 2011, Professor Boyle from the University of Glasgow was approached by the Education and Universities Manager of the Union of European Football Associations (UEFA). UEFA had identified Boyle through his international sports research profile as a possible candidate to develop a module for the first-ever Diploma in Football Management (DFM) programme (to be delivered March-May 2012). Boyle was invited to a formal interview in Switzerland, and was selected to help shape, create and deliver the content for the Public Relations and Media Operations module of the DFM programme. Building on his previous research, Boyle was asked to address the gaps in strategic thinking around public relations and use of social media identified by UEFA in many of their member national organisations. Boyle led the content generation of the module and worked with the senior UEFA Media Officer to deliver the content via an online e-learning programme and seminars.

Improving access to professional development for organisations of all sizes

The Union of European Football Associations (UEFA), is one of 6 continental confederations of world football's governing body, Fédération Internationale de Football Association. UEFA represents the 54 national football associations of Europe and runs international football competitions (such as the European Football Championships) and club competitions (Champions League and Europa League), and controls the prize money, regulations and media rights for these competitions. The first DFM was launched in 2011-2012 and comprised 36 participants, middle and senior managers working across 30 national football associations varying in size from large (English, German and Spanish leagues) through to medium-sized (Dutch, Turkish and Ukrainian) and smaller associations (Welsh, Icelandic and Latvian). 2012 graduates included; the Head of the Legal Department at the Football Federation of Ukraine (FFU); Events Manager at the German Football Association (DFL); Head of Finance at the Football Association of Wales; Club Licencing Manager at the Football Association of Norway (NFF); Coordinator of Strategy, Research and Education at the Royal Dutch Football Association (KNVB); Coach Education Manager at the Football Association of Ireland (FAI) and four deputy-general secretaries from the Bulgarian, Latvian, Lithuanian and Polish football associations.

The National Co-ordinator of Coach Education of the Football Association of Ireland said:

Having been a student on the UEFA Diploma in Football Management Course, and participated in Raymond Boyle's classes, I now have a more thorough, detailed understanding and strategic knowledge of PR, media relations and social media within my own National Association and beyond... Furthermore, having experienced the module, it has

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now enabled my staff and I within the Coach Education Dept to become more proactive when dealing with the press, rather than having to be reactionary as we were in the past.

Updating vocational skills and strategic knowledge

The Public Relations and Media Operations module created by Boyle directly helped shape the strategic thinking of DFM participants with regards to i) the role and position of public relations in their organisation and the need for organisational change to engage more fully with stakeholders; ii) the tactical use of social media as part of their communication strategy and iii) the need to develop and change their strategic thinking and evaluation of corporate social responsibility programmes. At the Royal Netherlands Football Association (KNVB), for example, communication strategies were well-developed, but managed by separate departments with independent strategies concerning website management, social media, media relations, corporate communication and communication with fans and sponsors. Boyle's DFM module highlighted the need to fully integrate these separate policies and consequently, the strength of the KNVB's communication strategy has improved significantly.

The module PR and Media Operations helped the KNVB to strengthen relationships with important stakeholders. Especially in maintaining strong communication with professional clubs in The Netherlands, the content of the course helped to take concrete action on improving the PR strategy.

(Coordinator of Strategy, Research and Education, Royal Netherlands Football Association).

Enhancing understanding of public and media relations

Boyle's significant research expertise shapes and informs the original content he has created for this core, mandatory Public Relations and Media Operations DFM module. It focuses on the key role that social media is playing in re-shaping football associations' communication strategies as well as providing a framework for modernising the communication thinking within football associations around the world. The Special Projects Assistant Manager for the FA (English Football Association), said;

This module has highlighted the importance of structures and methodologies to set out an organisation's media strategy. [The] content on social media and journalism is shaping our strategic thinking as we embrace new technology as well as recognising the importance of 'new journalists'... It has highlighted for us the importance of these new media formats and the opportunities that they bring in respect of accessing our stakeholders and fans and means that we will better interact with our fans, creating tailored and exclusive content that facilitates two-way communication that can strengthen the FA brand.

Developing best practice across the European national football leagues

The DFM is a unique and innovative intervention by an organising sporting association, seeking to enhance and develop best practice across its culturally diverse 54 member nations. The programme allows national association staff to continue to develop professionally and to acquire academic recognition for their work. The knowledge developed, the experience gained and wider network of contacts acquired via participation in this programme enhances best practice in public relations and media operations within the specific national associations represented.

In 2013, UEFA launched the development of a new programme, the Certificate in Football Management, for which Boyle has been invited to contribute a further Communication, Media and PR module. The Certificate in Football Management will be delivered with National Associations as part of their national in-house training policy, and the Football Association of Finland, German

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Football Association, Croatian Football Association, the FA (English Football Association) and the Georgian Football Federation have all committed to delivering this programme for up to 25 staff members in 2014.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact**Confirming the value of the module in promoting best practice across European national teams:**

- UEFA Education and Universities Manager, Switzerland (contact details provided)
- IDHEAP Director, Institut de hautes études en administration publique (Swiss Graduate School of Public Administration) (contact details provided)
- UEFA General Secretary, Switzerland (contact details provided)

Confirming the value of the module in enhancing skills and strategic knowledge of public and media relations:

In addition to the statements from the Dutch and Irish national team management which are embedded in the text, statements from the following are available from the HEI:

- Special Projects Assistant Manager, The Football Association, England (available from HEI)
- Sponsorship Manager, Deutscher Fussball Bund e. V. (available from HEI)