COMPARATIVE GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES OF EVENT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION: LESSONS FROM A SINO-GERMAN DOUBLE DEGREE EVENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

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The number of event management education programs offered by universities around the world is steadily increasing. However, most programs still focus on operational aspects and the project management of events and fail to consider the critical turn in event research that is currently gathering momentum. Based on critical theory, this article uses a qualitative, intrinsic case study to critically discuss the development and evolution of a bilateral, Sino-German event management education program over 13 years, including an outline of its future direction. Twenty-one semistructured interviews with lecturers, students, and alumni were conducted. Thematic analysis, a method that searches for themes in qualitative data, was used for data analysis. The findings demonstrate how the program gradually matured and developed from an operational focus—with a strong emphasis on exporting (business) event expertise from Germany to China—to its current state, where lecturers from two equal partner universities offer a variety of courses, critically discussing cultural, economic, social, and environmental event issues with students and peers. The findings can guide future critical research on event management education and assist other universities when implementing international cooperation with partner universities in different countries.

Key words: Event management education; Critical event research; Transnational education; Double degree programs

Introduction

The number of event management (EM) programs offered by universities around the world is steadily increasing (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & McDonnell, 2011; Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017). However, most programs focus on operational aspects and the project management of various types of events and fail to consider the critical turn in event research that is currently gathering momentum (Lamond & Platt,

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2016). Spracklen and Lamond (2016) highlighted that "it is impossible to explore and understand events without understanding the wider social, cultural and political contexts" (p. 1).

Similarly, Getz (2012) noted that a *credible* EM degree should be underpinned with theory and problem-solving skills. As such, there is an increasing call for more flexible EM programs that include varied learning (e.g., through lectures, seminars, internships, field trips) and examination options, students' engagement in critical discussion and debate, applied theory development, research components, and interdisciplinarity through closer cooperation with interrelated fields (Getz, 2012; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016). More emphasis needs to be placed on a "theoretical approach that combines established pedagogy and a systemic framework of understanding and creating knowledge about planned events" (Getz, 2012, p. 489). However, few studies have analyzed how exactly this can be achieved in the event management education (EME) sphere, as well as the challenges involved for students, lecturers, and universities. At the same time, a "one fits all" approach for all EME programs around the world is not suitable, given the diverse educational systems in different countries, heterogeneous management systems of universities, as well as different cultural contexts.

Based on critical theory, this study uses a qualitative, intrinsic case study to critically discuss the development and evolution of a bilateral EME program over 13 years. International Event Management Shanghai (IEMS), a Bachelor's degree program, was founded as a joint venture by Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences (HSOS), Germany, and Shanghai University of International Business and Economics (SUIBE), China, in 2003. IEMS was the first ever Sino-German EM program to be established and is officially accredited by both the Ministry of Education (MoE) in China and the Central Evaluation and Accreditation Agency (ZEvA) in Germany. Since its inception, more than 700 students have successfully graduated from the program.

Methodologically, 21 semistructured interviews with lecturers, students, and alumni from the program were conducted. A documentation review complements the findings. Conceptually, the study focuses on transnational education (TNE), higher education cultures, as well as critical event research.

In doing so, the study seeks to provide insights into the early challenges of setting up an EME program between two universities from different countries and cultural contexts, as well as the difficulties and challenges involved for students and lecturers from both Germany and China.

Research using critical theory in the context of EME is scant. A critical perspective on intercultural EME can lead to a better understanding of the multiple viewpoints and perceptions of students, lecturers, and universities from diverse cultural backgrounds as well as of challenges involved— including the reasons why these challenges occur. Such a perspective can help us to better address these challenges and offer more suitable EM programs, while at the same time facilitating the shift to a new EME paradigm, moving away from its operational focus.

Literature Review

Transnational Education (TNE)

Over the past 15 to 20 years, transnational education (TNE) has developed as a new form of international mobility. TNE can be defined as:

> All types of higher education study programs . . . in which the learners are located in a country different from the one where the awarding institution is based. Such programs may belong to the education system of a State different from the State in which it operates, or may operate independently of any national education system. (Council of Europe, 2002)

Thus, this form of education opens up a completely new group of students in higher education— students who had previously been unable (for financial or visa issues) or unwilling to go abroad. Due to this development, the number of TNE programs, as well as foreign campuses and educational hubs, are steadily increasing (Healey & Michael, 2014).

The highest growth rates of TNE education can be attributed to two countries—China and India— which both have doubled their higher education enrolments over the past decade. Since 2007, China has become one of the top 10 host countries for higher education in the world, with around 1,400 foreign institutions offering programs in China (Altbach, 2013).

In the developed world, the key motives for engaging in TNE programs are of economic nature (Hou, Montgomery, & McDowell, 2014). Thus, universities are encouraged to extend their markets in developing and middle-income countries through branch campuses, franchised degree programs, or partnerships. Other motives include political and cultural motives, for example, to achieve an influential position on the world stage or to make use of valuable international alumni relationships (Altbach & Knight, 2007). Internationalization of the curriculum, collaborative research, and the creation of multicultural campuses also represent smaller motives (Olcott, 2008). Conversely, universities from developing countries are engaging in TNE programs in order to introduce high quality education resources from other countries (Hou et al., 2014). For example, the Chinese government strongly emphasizes that education and TNE programs should support the public interest (Hou et al., 2014).

There have been two main concerns raised by both practitioners and scholars in the context of TNE programs: (1) cultural concerns and (2) quality concerns (Bannier, 2016).

Because TNE programs represent an export of educational programs to other countries, they are often referred to as "educational imperialism" (Bannier, 2016, p. 82). As such, a high level of cultural sensitivity is required in the context of TNE. In this context, the adoption of English as the main language for TNE programs has led to great debate. Countries like Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, and China have shifted away from their mother tongue to programs delivered entirely in English (Hou et al., 2014). However, whether nonnative language education can be seen as a barrier or rather a facilitator of meaning making in the constructivist environment has been debated (Bannier, 2016). In addition, the different cultural contexts should be taken into account. Most TNE programs are delivered by low context, individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2001) such as the UK, the US, or Australia. In these countries, information and knowledge is delivered in a straightforward, explicit form using concrete, literal words. On the other hand, most Asian countries are high-context countries where meaning is conveyed in indirect ways, for example through gesticulation or other social clues. This represents a challenge for learners from high-context cultures who are already

challenged by the non-English environment (Hou et al., 2014).

The second concern relates to the quality of TNE programs (Bannier, 2016; Hou et al., 2014). Perceptions of this quality vary greatly throughout the world. Different agencies such as UNESCO and the International Network for Quality Assurance Agencies in Higher Education have collected data measuring the quality of TNE programs for some time. This data show that quality control measures correlate with the developmental stages of nations (Stella & Woodhouse, 2011). In this context, China faces particular TNE quality concerns given the rapid enrolment expansion in higher education. Effective administration of new programs and capacity building are particular issues (Bannier, 2016). Overall, a growing interest in both importing and exporting countries is placed on quality, with more evidence-based approaches and quality assurance systems becoming increasingly important (Hou et al., 2014).

Lately, there appears to be a shift from the old stereotypical view and geopolitical configuration within TNE. The notion that English-speaking countries mainly act as suppliers and developing countries as receivers tends to blur, with several countries (e.g., Malaysia, China) starting to act as both suppliers and receivers (Hou et al., 2014). Analyzing and comparing the latest developments of TNE in different countries will provide a better understanding of the underlying processes and challenges within this complex environment.

Higher Education Cultures in China and Germany

There are strong differences in the higher education cultures of Germany and China (Steinkuhl, Gray, & Metz, 2016). Sun (2010) provided an overview of the main dimension of higher education culture and the differences between China and Germany (see Table 1).

In general, Chinese students tend to be more reserved and have more respect for age, hierarchy, and the significance of education. Roles are very clearly defined. Teaching in China tends to happen in a rather monologic manner with little room for self-reflection or criticism toward teacher or subject. Students listen to their respected teacher and learn through the concept of repetition. Copying

Table 1

Dimensions of and Differences in Higher Education Cultures

	Main Differences	
Dimension of Higher Education Culture	China	Germany
Access to higher education and degree	Strict selection prior to beginning of studies	Broad access for prospective students
	Guaranteed graduation	Strict selection after beginning of studies
Student organization and administration	Third party administration	Autonomy and self-administration
Study organization	Centralized study organization	Self-organization
Orientation of tuition and development of competencies	Unifying and standardizing tuition and competence development	Individualizing tuition and competence development
Performance requirements and control	Formalized performance requirements and control	Immanent performance requirements and strict performance control
Shaping of social relations and contacts	Socially tight-knit university	Socially loosely linked university
Role awareness of lecturers	Hierarchical role awareness of lecturers	Egalitarian role awareness of lecturers
Role awareness of students	Immaturity-oriented role awareness of students	Responsibility-oriented role awareness of students

Source: Adapted from Lux (2013, p. 85), based on Sun (2010).

and reproducing are in line with the traditional value of harmony (Faure & Fang, 2008). Questioning the teacher is regarded as disrespectful; content is mostly learned by heart. Harmonious cooperation and the avoidance of conflicts and "losing face" are important parts of everyday life in China. In contrast, aspects such as critical thinking and reflection, discussing, arguing, criticizing, as well as active and opinionated debates are common components in Germany and actively taught in lectures (Lux, 2013; Sun, 2010).

However, the last 35 years have brought tremendous societal changes to China. Through globalization and web-based technologies, Chinese students have been increasingly confronted with other cultures and lifestyles as well as with different learning and teaching styles. Thus, Steinkuhl et al. (2016) referred to a:

> New generation of students who despite valuing old traditions, values, and culture, may be more likely to question exactly these old traditions, values, and culture, positioning themselves and making more individual and perhaps even seemingly selfish decisions to promote their own academic careers, their professional goals, and their individual future lives. (p. 395)

Event Management Education

With the expansion of the event industry and the increase in private and public event budgets, the organization and management of events has become increasingly complex, leading to a call for more skilled event professionals to meet the industry's specific requirements (Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017; Barron & Leask, 2012). This has resulted in an increased interest in EME and training at both vocational and tertiary level (Allen et al., 2011; Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017).

Over the last years, the number of event-related degrees and courses offered by universities and other tertiary institutions has increased significantly. Ryan (2016) found 88 institutions in the UK alone that offer 231 higher education EM courses. Getz (2012) explained this growth with the rise of the "experience economy" and with the legitimation of planned events as instruments of government policies and corporate and industries' strategies. However, Barron and Leask (2012) called this growth in event-specific courses and degrees "unprecedented," cautioning that this development would result in an oversupply of programs and graduates in the future.

Event-related degree names are multifarious, and the topics and courses taught within these degrees are similarly diverse. There have also been strong debates by both scholars and practitioners about the skills and knowledge needed for graduates and the subsequent composition of an ideal EM curriculum (e.g., Nelson & Rutherford Silvers, 2009; Ryan, 2016). Further debates surround the unrealistic expectations of students regarding the reality of event industry work and the management level

of employment they reach after graduation. A particular discrepancy concerns the salary expectations by students versus their actual remuneration (e.g., Beaven & Wright, 2006; Robinson, Barron, & Solnet, 2008). Finally, there still appears to be a gap between industry and academia with an urgent need for educators and industry to better collaborate to produce more meaningful research and education programs for the benefit of all (Harris, 2004).

Research on Event Management Education. In line with the increasing supply of event-related degrees and trainings, research on EME has also increased significantly (e.g., Barron & Leask, 2012; Silvers, Bowdin, O'Toole, & Beard Nelson, 2006). For example, studies have analyzed curriculum design (e.g., Getz, 2012; Robertson, Junek, & Lockstone-Binney, 2012), career development and employment (e.g., Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017; Junek, Lockstone, & Mair, 2009), and the increasing call for the professionalization of EME (e.g., Bladen & Kennell, 2014; Jiang & Schmader, 2014). Particular focus has been placed on the value and methods of internships or industrial placements and other forms of experiential learning (e.g., Beaven & Wright, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). Most of these studies pointed to the benefits for students to gain relevant work experience within the event industry and to enhance students' employability (e.g., Barron & Leask, 2012). However, some studies (e.g., Beer, 2008; Moscardo & Norris, 2004) also emphasized the resource-intensive organization, administration, and supervision of these placements, which can be stressful for staff and students.

In 2006, Silvers and colleagues developed EMBOK (The Event Management Body of Knowledge; see also embok.org), which presents EM from a project management perspective, highlighting the knowledge and skills required to create and organize an event (Silvers et al., 2006). EMBOK is regarded as a useful framework to develop academic programs. However, it is also criticized by academics for its project management perspective, its focus on administration rather than management, and its emphasis on factual knowledge and problem-solving skills (Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017; Getz, 2012).

This corroborates the growing criticism by scholars that most EM degree programs tend to focus on operational considerations associated with the project management of events (Lamond & Platt, 2016; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016). Only recently, courses taught at university and other tertiary institutions have started to move away from this operational and functionalist approach to include courses, seminars, and lectures embracing social, cultural, and political trajectories and debates. Getz (2012) noted:

> If this applied [event management] field is to survive and prosper in academia, it must reflect upon its interdisciplinarity, strive to create new theory and methods and remain connected to the various foundation disciplines. This is what I have called Event Studies. Without the "studies" there is little academic justification for a university degree. (p. 477)

Getz proposed a curriculum space for professional event studies which is based around the domains "acting" (e.g., learning how to manage an event and gaining problem-solving and learning skills), "knowing" (e.g., knowledge about methodologies and methods), and "being" (preparing students to become good citizens and to act as professionals). Getz (2012) called for more flexible, lifelong learning systems, systematic knowledge creation, interdisciplinary research, and theory development as a firm foundation for any EM program. This requires "a complete rethinking of professionalism and education delivery in the field" (p. 489).

Event Management Education in Germany. In Germany, the management and organization of events is taught at vocational training schools (as apprenticeships) or universities. An increasing number of private and public universities have started to offer academic EM programs over the last two decades. Gehrke, Spott de Barrera, and Lampe (2017) found 58 bachelor programs and 12 master programs related to EM in Germany. Most of these programs do not offer "pure" EM but combine EM with related areas such as tourism management, business management, marketing, media/communication, international management, sport management, or business administration. The majority of these programs are offered by "universities of applied sciences" (higher education institutions with a higher practical focus, but

well-founded academic education). Only two are offered by "purely academic" universities.

Event Management Education in China. Similar to hospitality and tourism education in the 1980's, EME in China started very late but developed rapidly due to the boom of conventions, exhibitions, incentive travel, and the event industry as a whole (Huimin & Hobson, 2008). By 2017, the number of institutions that initiated EM-related programs increased to 108, with 650 full-time faculties and more than 13,000 students. Seventy-seven universities now offer programs or minors in EM at master's level (Ding, 2015; Q. Yang, 2017). EM programs in China originate from a large variety of disciplines, which can be broadly grouped into seven categories: tourism management, international trade, business administration, advertising and communication, art designing, sports, and foreign languages (Zeng & Yang, 2011).

Overall, EME in China has become more professional and quality-driven (C. Wang, 2010). However, the boom in EME has also caused challenges. Contemporary debates in Chinese EME include the focus of project management and logistical aspects (e.g., Q. Y. Wang, 2017; Xu, Huang, & Zhang, 2012), curriculum enhancement (Li & Liu, 2017; J. Yang & Hui, 2017), and the application of new forms of teaching using technological advances, such as massive open online courses and augmented and virtual reality (e.g., Feng, 2017).

Critical Event Research

Scholars recently started to debate the dominance of a "neo-liberal economic agenda that seeks to de-politicise and, to some extent, de-culturate many events into some quasi-homogenous, 'Western-'influenced, entertainment" (Lamond & Platt, 2016, p. 2), limiting the research philosophies and theoretical frameworks available for event scholars. They called for a better understanding of what exactly an event is and what the studies of events should include (Lamond & Platt, 2016; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016). In this context, Rojek (2014) highlighted that the contemporary event management literature is "overwhelmingly uncritical and self-congratulatory" (p. 32).

Spracklen and Lamond (2016) emphasized that the theories and practices required to progress critical event studies are nuanced and complex. They regarded the clarity on context and its relationship to the event as central to a deeper understanding of what critical event studies really entail. To better understand the context in which such an interpretation of events can be articulated, they drew on key concepts and theory from social and cultural theory (e.g., Bourdieu, 2005; Foucault, 2014; Habermas, 1997) and concluded:

> Where the study of events management is predominantly operational, and the primary focus of events studies is the relationship between the event and its context, . . . a critical events studies is interested in the context's relationship to the event—specially, though not exclusively, when that context stands (at least in part) in contestation to the event. A truly critical event studies is thus not only a matter of interest for researchers and students who are interested in events, but one that can form an analytical lens throughout the social sciences and humanities. (Spracklen & Lamond, 2016, p. 20)

Thus, critical event research challenges preceding studies and accepts a central contestation at the heart of all events. Standard models of event analysis no longer work in today's globalized and connected world, in which events—particularly mega-events—come at an increasing cost (such as protests, evictions, or pollution to name a few examples) and face increasing critical discussion within society (Lamond & Platt, 2016). This critical discussion is reflected in an increasing number of recent event studies (e.g., Andrews & Leopold, 2013; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016), advocating for a more nuanced understanding of events, often responding to questions of appropriate methodological approaches and theoretical frameworks for event analyses. These studies can also be seen as a timely response to Getz's (2007) call that EM needs to widen its reach to become a broader and theoretically enriched area of academic scholarship, one he calls "event studies" (as outlined earlier).

Overall, critical event studies is regarded as a new and strong strand within the scholarly study of events, seeking to gain a new understanding of the role of events within our society. There is a great need for EM *education* to reflect these recent

developments and to fuel this debate within EM curricula, courses, lectures, and seminars.

Method

This research applies critical theory to a study on EME or—more precisely—a study on a bilateral EM program. The study intends to present the diversity of values within the standpoint of the two partner universities, the students, and lecturers. In line with Creswell and Poth (2017), the research starts with assumptions on struggles due to cultural differences, seeks to document them, and then provides potential solutions and suggestions for the future.

Case Study

Given the relative dearth of studies in this context, an exploratory, qualitative, intrinsic case study approach was adopted. In an intrinsic case study, the focus is on the case itself, because the case "presents an unusual or unique situation" (Creswell & Poth, 2017, p. 99), that is, the researchers have an intrinsic interest in the case itself (Stake, 2010). A case study approach is particularly suitable to broaden our knowledge of individual, group, or organizational behavior and to examine change processes as they allow for the study of contextual factors (Halinen & Törnroos, 2005; Yin, 2009).

Case Study Context. IEMS, a full-time six-semester Bachelor's degree program for Chinese students in Shanghai, has been offered as a joint venture by HSOS and SUIBE since October 2003.

SUIBE (formerly Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, SIFT) was founded in 1960 as an institution of higher learning affiliated to the Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Cooperation. Since 1994, it has operated under the supervision of the Shanghai Municipality. SIFT was one of the first higher education institutions related to foreign trade in Eastern China and offered different study programs in economics, law, finance, and foreign languages. In 2013, it acquired university status and was renamed SUIBE. Today, SUIBE consists of 12 faculties, including the "Tourism and Event Management School (TEMS)," which also hosts

IEMS. In total, more than 1,000 employees (including 400 professors) and approx. 10,000 students (including 2,000 foreign students) work or study at SUIBE. The university offers 12 bilateral programs in cooperation with universities from Australia, the UK, Canada, and Germany.

HSOS is a higher education institution located in the north-west of Germany. The university employs more than 1,200 people in four faculties and an Institute of Music. Currently, 13,500 students are enrolled in around 100 degree programs (mainly bachelor and master). HSOS's network of international relations includes more than 200 international partner universities. The cooperation with China is particularly strong. The university offers two double degree programs with Chinese universities and has operated a "China Competence Centre" since 2013.

The joint Sino-German Bachelor's degree program IEMS is officially accredited in both China and Germany and is managed by two directors, one from HSOS and one from SUIBE. Half of the courses of the joint curriculum are held by HSOS lecturers in English in 2-week block lectures. The other half are held in Chinese by the Chinese lecturer team in Shanghai. The subjects include fundamental management courses (e.g., Marketing, Financial Management, Strategic Management, Cultural Management, Entrepreneurial Management, and Human Resource Management) and specialist event courses (e.g., Event Operations and Logistics, Management of Venues and Event Destinations, Trade Fair and Exhibition Management, Event Finance and Risk Management, and Management of Corporate Events). All IEMS students are required to do a 12-week internship (as part of the final semester) with an organization in the event industry (or related industry) in order to gain practical, hands-on experience. In the final semester, the students also need to write a "bachelor thesis" of approx. 12,000 to 15,000 words in English, which critically examines an event-related topic. The thesis is defended in an oral examination and evaluated by two supervisors (one German, one Chinese). Practical experience plays a significant role. This is achieved in four different ways: close relationships with event industry organizations (for guest lectures, fieldtrips), self-organized campus events (for example, IEMS students design, plan,

operate, and manage a student exhibition on campus every year), the direct participation at events and the internship (Ding, Gaida, & Schwägermann, 2016).

In 2016, the Shanghai Education Committee officially honored IEMS as one of the five leading Sino-foreign cooperative programs in Shanghai. IEMS has also been distinguished for excellence in EME by the China Convention and Event Society every year since 2009.

Data Collection

This research concentrates on two of the six sources of evidence recommended for case studies (Yin, 2009): documentation and interviews.

Semistructured Interviews. Twenty-one semistructured interviews with lecturers and students of the IEMS program were conducted. More specifically, 5 current IEMS students, 5 alumni, and 11 lecturers (6 from HSOS, 5 from SUIBE) were interviewed. Semistructured interviews were selected because they are flexible, but they also offer some structure through the interview guide, thus assisting in comparing cases, structures, or events (Bryman, 2008) and facilitating comprehensive interviewing within a limited timeframe (Patton, 2002). Examples of the questions included: "What do you think the main differences between the German and the Chinese lecturers (and teaching styles) are?" "What are the main challenges involved when studying an intercultural program involving two institutions from different cultural backgrounds?" and "What do you think about your future career options after having finished studying IEMS?" The interviews were conducted via telephone, WeChat or in person—depending on the location of the interviewee—and lasted between 26 and 83 min. They were audio-taped and transcribed verbatim. In addition, notes were taken throughout all interviews to capture important thoughts and perspectives of the interviewee (Patton, 2002).

Documentation. A large variety of administrative documents, such as reports and internal records, e-mail communication, formal studies and evaluations, agendas and minutes of meetings, websites, and online articles were analyzed. Although the findings from the interviews were the most important source of evidence, the results from the detailed documentation review assisted greatly in enriching the findings.

Data Analysis

Thematic analysis, a flexible method for qualitative research, was selected to analyze the data from both the interviews and the documentation review (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Because of the lack of preexisting research about bilateral EME, an inductive approach was adopted. The research team followed Braun and Clarke's (2006) six phase step-by-step guide for thematic analysis. In an iterative process the codes and themes were constantly revisited and rechecked by the lead researcher (Patton, 2002). All themes and codes were then independently cross-checked by the coauthors to ensure reliability of coding (Bryman, 2008). Seven themes were identified across the data (see Table 2).

Results and Discussion

This section presents the main findings according to the themes and codes derived from the data (see Table 2).

Challenges During the Setup Period of the IEMS Program

IEMS was set up in 2003 as a result of the Chinese government's decision to develop Shanghai

Table 2

Codes and Themes Derived From Data Analysis

No.	Theme
1	Challenges during the setup period of the IEMS program
2	Start and early years of the program
3	Teaching and studying cross-culturally
	The lecturer perspective
	The student and alumni perspective
4	The development of the program
	Student development
	Lecturer development
	Administrative and managerial development
5	Strengths and achievements of the program
6	Remaining challenges
7	The future of the program

as the most important economic and international trade center of the country. The city tried to develop and enhance different industry sectors, including the event and exhibition industry. Shanghai also successfully bid to host the 2010 World Expo. However, there was a lack of available industry professionals and talents as well as specific event knowledge to support this development. In cooperation with the Chinese MoE and with the support of the Shanghai Municipal Education Commission, SUIBE decided to establish an EM program as a pilot scheme. Given the lack of experience in this field, the integration of a foreign university with specific knowledge in the area of EM was considered the best way forward. SUIBE conducted intensive research of potential partners in the US, Australia, and Europe. One interviewee described the decision process:

> We got to the conclusion that the event industry in Germany is the kind of industry that we want to develop in Shanghai in the future . . . we wanted to find some people who could help us from Germany and bring up professionals that have the knowledge, ability, and ideas to get us prepared . . . we went to University of Applied Sciences in Osnabrück. . . . We were happy with their practical approach. . . . We thought that our [similar] ideas about the practice of education in higher institutions would help us . . . become very good partners in the future.

HSOS regarded the proposal from SUIBE as an interesting opportunity for the university to become more international and globally active. However, a critical element was the funding of the joint venture. To secure financial viability, HSOS successfully applied for funding with the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD).

Overall, the interviewees identified the following challenges in the initial stages of the cooperation: (1) lack of knowledge about the other party, (2) cultural differences, (3) different management systems, and (4) risk of failure.

Both parties had not worked together before and so the people involved had to get to know each other. One participant described this process:

> We did not have working experience together, which was unusual for a program like that. We knew the Chinese have an interest in collaboration in that field. They knew we have some

expertise but whether we really fit, . . . was perfectly unclear.

In addition, the cultural differences made the set up and early stages of the program difficult. One interviewee explained:

> At the very beginning, the Chinese colleagues . . . didn't ask a lot of questions, they didn't challenge other people's ideas because they thought it was not polite. But our German partners quite expected that we would speak our minds . . . because only after we have a discussion, things can be clarified completely. So, it is not a question of what is right and what is wrong, but what is more applicable to the surroundings. And with this approach we have overcome a lot of cultural differences.

The educational systems between China and Germany were very different, as were the management systems of the two universities. Following several months of negotiations, the first cooperation agreement was signed in 2003. The contract was based on an equal distribution of tasks and costs as well as an equal distribution of courses taught (Raaphorst, 2015). Both sides spent a large amount of time developing a joint curriculum and carefully selecting appropriate lecturers. One interviewee explained:

> [we had] to find those courses which are suitable to this program. And [decide] what kind of courses can [HSOS] offer and how can we put these German offerings into our teaching plan, which is quite strictly regulated in the Chinese educational system.

Many people within both universities had to become involved and persuaded regarding adaptations and amendments to existing processes and procedures.

Rather than the prevalent 2+2 system that other bilateral university programs offered (students spend 2 years in one country, then 2 years in the other country), the partners decided to offer a 4+0 system; that is, the program would take place entirely in Shanghai and the students would not go to Germany for their studies. Instead, the German lecturers would travel to China and teach as a "flying faculty." The goal was to open the program to more students and to save them the high costs of

studying abroad. In addition, the IEMS management team managed to secure some DAAD scholarships for IEMS students to either attend a summer school or spend a whole semester in Osnabrück. These scholarships have been used ever since as an important incentive for students to study hard.

HSOS was particularly worried about a potential risk of failure. The highest concerns pertained to whether Chinese students would embrace the program. This risk was fueled by the lack of experience in cooperating with Chinese partners, the lack of knowledge of the functioning of the Chinese educational system in general, and the lack of experience educating Chinese students. The HSOS IEMS team was confronted with several challenges and faced strong initial reservations from its home university due to these potential risks. Some colleagues in Osnabrück did not support the collaboration, because (as one interviewee noted) "they thought we give away intellectual property."

Overall, these findings demonstrate that IEMS represents a typical TNE program; that is, the export of an educational program from one country to another (Bannier, 2016). To enhance their professionalism in the organization and hosting of big events, China intended to train and educate its own talents. Thus, SUIBE established a pilot scheme for EME and found HSOS as a reliable, competent partner to introduce high quality foreign education resources (in line with Hou et al., 2014). However, in contrast to most other universities in the developed world (Altbach & Knight, 2007), HSOS' main motives for engaging in the TNE program was not of economic nature. HSOS wanted to use the opportunity to gain international experience (in line with Olcott, 2008) and become more globally active.

The findings also vividly present the social and cultural interactions of two parties from different cultural contexts, with Germany as a low context, individualistic culture on the one hand and the high context Chinese culture on the other (Hofstede, 2001; Hou et al., 2014). This led to particular challenges in the set up and early years of the program. The two parties had to find consensus between the straight-forward, explicit form of communication by HSOS versus the indirect communication of the SUIBE team, in order to make sure that ideas, perspectives, and needs of both parties were adequately addressed.

Start and Early Years of the Program

In September 2004, the first lectures of the joint program started. One interviewee described the start and the mixed feelings of students as follows:

> [The students] were very much worried, not only the students but their parents because this was a pilot scheme. They knew there were no other students who had ever experienced this kind of education and we didn't have any graduates at that time so, they didn't know whether we would be well accepted by the industry, whether they could find a good job as they expected.

The cooperation between the two universities was very new and the communication limited, it only started to grow and evolve over the years. Both the German and the Chinese team were originally very focused on their part of the program, as one interviewee noted:

> I got the feeling there were two parts in this program and that these were separately planned. So that half of the program was in Chinese and the Chinese colleagues felt responsible for that. And the other part was from the German colleagues.

The main challenges identified in the early stages related to (1) language barriers, (2) cultural challenges including different teaching styles, (3) class sizes, (4) limited financial and human resources, and (5) quality assurance. A typical comment was made by one German interviewee:

> So here [in Germany] our average size class would be 35 and there it was 70. . . . Here, the English language capabilities of students . . . is typically much higher. . . . And the participatory manner of teaching [was a challenge] because my style is rather participatory. And initially the Chinese students, they were actually quite shy.

A SUIBE lecturer stated, "Not only the human resources, but also financial resources [were limited]. At the beginning, the team was very limited, we had to organize all the work with very limited resources." In the early years of the program, SUIBE was not able to offer all courses originally planned. HSOS had to step in and teach some of these courses (Raaphorst, 2015).

These findings reflect the administrative challenges and resource constraints of the early days

(financially and personnel related), mirroring previous findings that point to administration and capacity building as particular issues in China due to the fast enrolment expansion in recent years (Bannier, 2016).

The quality assurance of the program was of particular concern to HSOS, as the people in charge did not want to lower the German standards when rewarding their degree. Therefore, HSOS introduced some strict internal quality assurance systems, which not only included student evaluations, but also benchmark studies for lecturer performance. IEMS also had to undergo an official accreditation process by ZEvA in Germany to receive approval of the Chinese MoE and to follow strict regulations and processes from the DAAD in order to receive funding. All these elements assisted in ensuring a high level of quality in the program. In the early years, Chinese students were used to copying texts for assignments and theses and their academic writing skills were not well developed. HSOS accordingly added additional, compulsory courses for students on academic writing and offered additional training for Chinese lecturers. For the subsequent years, an integrated plan for the training of writing skills was developed and implemented (Raaphorst, 2015).

Overall, these findings corroborate previous research (Hou et al., 2014; Stella & Woodhouse, 2011) and demonstrate that quality concerns also played a significant role for IEMS. HSOS took these concerns very seriously and implemented a strict quality assurance system right from the start—in line with the global developments in the TNE sphere (e.g., Hou et al., 2014). Although the overall level of quality of the IEMS program has steadily increased over time (as noted by the interviewees), securing and improving this level of quality will be important in the future, particularly given that the number of EM programs and the competition in China is steadily increasing (C. Wang, 2010; Zeng & Yang, 2011).

In 2008, the first students graduated from the program. One interviewee described the difficulties they faced on the labor market:

Event management was a very new area in China. Even in Shanghai . . . so when the students graduated and [applied for a job], when the employer read . . . their CVs, like a graduate from the event industry . . . everybody asked "what means event?" So, at the beginning there were challenges in terms of the recognition from society.

However, an early evaluation showed that the graduates were satisfied with the program, had high success rates in applications for continued education, and high employment rates compared with students graduating from other Chinese programs. Also, due to SUIBE's good reputation in China, it was no problem to fill the program's places (Raaphorst, 2015).

Teaching and Studying Cross-Culturally

The Lecturer Perspective. The German lecturers received cultural training (as a workshop) before they first started to teach in the program. However, preparing lectures or case studies without a high level of knowledge about the Chinese market or Chinese contexts was difficult. The language barrier constituted an additional difficulty. One lecturer noted, "Without knowledge of Chinese, you only had a limited amount of literature to get information from," for example when providing practical examples or preparing case studies. Because the students were not familiar with the new field "EM," it was hard to provide them with real-life examples or ask about their experiences.

The cultural differences also led to a large variety of challenges within the teaching experience. One interviewee who taught in the program for 8 years noted: "Speaking frankly, after the first 2 weeks lecturing in Shanghai I said 'never again.' . . . One reason . . . was that I didn't understand the Chinese way of thinking, of learning, of asking, of answering." Another German lecturer stated:

Chinese students . . . find it perfectly ok to sleep in the classroom while I'm teaching . . . it's absolutely impossible in Germany . . . to sleep in the classroom . . . it's absolutely impossible . . . here that repeatedly students try to cheat when submitting papers . . . so how to deal with it, how to keep calm and to discuss it and to reflect on the circumstances and to discuss the issues, to keep in mind that they have paid the tuition fees, to keep in mind that they have learned different norms. So that's quite a challenge.

The HSOS lecturers had to adapt their lectures and their teaching styles to new circumstances and

different cultural contexts. One lecturer highlighted that "it was very difficult to get students to interact . . . for the simple reason . . . that they weren't used to interacting and discussing certain concepts and certain theories." All HSOS lecturers universally agreed that their teaching had to be "slower, with a lot of repetition" and most of them made extensive use of visual material (e.g., video clips) and practical exercises. One HSOS lecturer provided a specific example:

> I had . . . to make sure that the exercises I do, that it was possible to do them with 60, 70 students, that also the seating arrangement makes it more difficult to do something like group work. I learned that you shouldn't put people in groups together because it is easier for them to work together if they are working in the group in which they share the dormitory, because otherwise they don't have any space where to meet [and prepare their assignments].

The different managerial procedures (e.g., different marking systems or handling failures) also led to challenges. One interviewee explained: "In the first years, when someone failed in the bachelor thesis defense, this was quite a sensation and we had discussions and the head of the program in China was contacted by parents and . . . we were in panic." A SUIBE lecturer highlighted "we needed to accept the German way of examination and there are varied forms of examination, it's not just exams, there is also team work, there are also research projects, practical projects and also oral exams."

Another SUIBE lecturer summarized the main differences between the German and Chinese lecturers as follows:

> We Chinese see students like kids, like we are at a higher hierarchy. . . . So [we say to our students] "you should listen to me, you're not supposed to argue with me, if you don't agree with me you can discuss with me later in a very polite way and you're not supposed to challenge me in a classroom." German lecturers . . . encourage students to talk with them, to communicate with them.

Overall, the findings reflect the cultural differences between Germany and China and point to several barriers the lecturers faced during their teaching experience, such as the limited degree of self-reflection and critical thinking, avoidance of conflict, and strong need for repetition by Chinese students (Lux, 2013; Sun, 2010). However, the close exchange between the lecturers helped significantly to overcome cultural barriers. One interviewee noted that "with several of the colleagues I talked a lot about teaching experiences, like which methods are going quite well?"

The Student and Alumni Perspective. The analysis of the data revealed similar thoughts and perspectives expressed by both the current students and the alumni on the experience of studying cross-culturally. All students and alumni saw an advantage in studying cross-culturally and getting to know a different culture. One student noted: "I like the contrast between the two different cultures. . . . It makes you think more and makes you more tolerant and accept different principles or different views." The students also referred to the advantage of receiving different multicultural views and perspectives on event-related topics. One student highlighted: "[if SUIBE] weren't cooperating with Germany, we would just learn the Chinese style of how to handle event topics. But by cooperating with Germany, we can learn how Germans are dealing with these topics."

Other students particularly saw the advantage in obtaining two degrees, including one international degree, to gain a good job after graduation. One alumni noted: "it's really good with job hunting, because they also think that you have an international learning experience and you have more views about . . . things."

All students specifically highlighted the difference in teaching styles among German and Chinese lecturers. Most of them liked the more participatory approach by HSOS lecturers. One alumni explained:

> The German style, it's like they encourage you to learn something by yourself and they always expect more active reactions from the students. That's why . . . we were always given some small projects to do by ourselves, to create something, to express our opinions, our ideas, which I found is really good for us, but in the Chinese style this is sometimes missing.

Most students also described the difficulties when studying cross-culturally, particularly at the

beginning of their studies. One student emphasized that "[the German lecturers'] pace, their speed is faster than that of our Chinese lecturers." These challenges are further exacerbated through the block courses. One student noted: "[In the beginning,] I found it's very difficult for me because the lecturers have to teach us many definitions and concepts in just 1 week or 2 weeks." Other challenges included the different English accents by HSOS lecturers and the more independent learning style that HSOS lecturers applied. One student remarked that the teaching style by "Westerners" "is more difficult for those [students] who cannot get along well with others. You should be very open, outgoing."

To prepare for the classes taught by HSOS, most students studied class material in advance. In addition, some Chinese lecturers also tried to prepare the students for the "intercultural experience" by discussing cultural differences and different teaching styles of German and Chinese lecturers. One student noted that "our Chinese lecturers . . . told us a little about the German culture. But it could have been more."

In summary, the experiences from lecturers, students, and alumni particularly demonstrate the challenges involved when dealing with intercultural context and norms. In line with Sun (2010), the findings have confirmed the cultural differences, such as the role awareness of lecturers (hierarchical awareness of the Chinese vs. egalitarian awareness by the German lecturers) and students (rather immaturity-oriented role awareness of Chinese students), the more centralized study organization in China and the clashes of different norms when Chinese students cheat, fail, and are not able to graduate (given the "guaranteed graduation" in China; Faure & Fang, 2008). The HSOS lecturers tried to accommodate these cultural differences by changing and adapting their teaching styles (e.g., including more repetition, speaking slower, using more visual content).

The students' struggle with their English language abilities in the early days also added to the debate whether teaching and learning in a nonnative language acted as a barrier or as a facilitator of meaning making (Bannier, 2016). The findings show that the mere knowledge of the English language does not automatically guarantee the understanding of concepts and theories rooted in different cultures.

Program Development

2008 marked an important year for the study program: SUIBE founded the "Tourism and Event Management School" (TEMS) in which IEMS became a recognized major, thus ceasing to be a pilot scheme. The first graduates received their double degree (Bachelor of Arts in Event Management, HSOS and Bachelor of Management, SUIBE). HSOS decided not to reapply for DAAD funding in 2009 (when the first funding period ended) and so the program became self-sustaining.

Student Development. All lecturers pointed to an apparent development and growth of the students over the years, particularly in terms of language abilities, communication skills, and critical thinking. One HSOS lecturer highlighted:

> The critical ability has improved quite dramatically, they are more prepared to . . . discuss and provide very critical feedback. While a few years back, the feedback was not that critical, it was more about just restating the facts, so it wasn't the critical thinking as such.

Asked how the students have developed over time, one SUIBE lecturer noted that "the international view of our students [has improved]. The global view of our students. The view and the capacity, a better word could be competence, right?"

The lecturers also highlighted that the students were well prepared for a job in the event industry. One alumni, who now works as a senior project manager for a Chinese event agency explained: "The IEMS program provided me with a professional attitude to manage an event from different perspectives. . . . So IEMS prepared me very well for my job."

The findings demonstrate how the Chinese students developed and grew over time. Their language abilities, communication, and critical thinking skills increased. This development facilitated much stronger, critical discussions during lectures and seminars, addressing the call for enhanced critical reflection within EME programs (Getz, 2012).

Lecturer Development. The lecturers also developed over time and increased their capabilities, skills, and experiences. A Chinese lecturer

explained: "Our team on the SUIBE side, at the beginning, we were not very academic. . . . Now, [a lot of us] have finished our Ph.D.s. It's very important for a Chinese university." A German lecturer pointed out: "Our lecturers . . . they are more international now than before, their English is better, their experience with handling foreign students is better." As such, the HSOS lecturers were able to personally develop and grow and to increase their international teaching skills and competences—thus achieving exactly what HSOS had hoped for when initially establishing the cooperation. One lecturer reflected:

> What I realized . . . was I had to do group activities that could develop competencies and help them to understand what the theory meant. . . . I would say, the theory hasn't actually reduced, but to illustrating, and showing them what to do with theory, and how to maybe think about it more conceptually, think about it more critically rather than just memorizing it.

Overall, the IEMS' lecturers strived to leave behind the operational focus and to integrate a more critical event perspective by fostering critical class debates and theory development (Getz, 2012; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016), also improving their own academic abilities and knowledge bases in the process.

Administrative and Managerial Development. The management and administration of IEMS has also been enhanced and professionalized. Since 2009, the project coordination on the German side is in the hands of one project coordinator who handles the administration professionally and efficiently. Also, the working relationships between the two parties have become closer and processes have been adapted and are working successfully:

> In the last 3 or 4 or 5, 6 years the cooperation . . . has been more clear, clear lines of cooperation. I think procedures, policies have been set up. . . . There's better sort of working relationships where everybody is clear what's expected of them.

These findings show how administrative challenges—which are common in intercultural contexts (Bannier, 2016)—have been effectively addressed over time.

Strengths and Achievements of the Program

The participants have identified the following strengths of the program: (1) the internationality, (2) the team, (3) administration and leadership of the program, (4) the high level of communication between the partners, (5) the curriculum and the variety of courses offered, (6) the strong practical approach and close relationship to the industry, and (7) successful graduates.

The HSOS lecturer team consists of lecturers from German, British, and South African descents. Students are exposed to a very international team with different cultural backgrounds, which helps them to understand different cultural views and perspectives. All participants agreed that very trustful relationships have developed between the two partners and that the bilateral communication is excellent. The management and administration teams communicate on a daily basis via e-mail, Skype, video conferences, or WeChat. Overall, the team is described as very enthusiastic and motivated; the trustful and friendly relationships between HSOS and SUIBE lecturers were particularly highlighted. In 2014, the IEMS directors on both the German and the Chinese side changed. This transition was also highly commended and described as a very "smooth process." When asked what exactly made IEMS successful over time, one participant noted:

> I think, firstly, it is our team. . . . And [secondly] how the lecturers communicate. . . . For example, if we need some difficult things I ask [the German project coordinator] for some help, [she answers] me very quickly. So working efficiently is very important for a project. And the third thing is our leaders . . . they are very professional and ambitious persons.

The IEMS curriculum offers a very strong management foundation with fundamental management courses plus specialized event courses. It was last modified in mid-2017, when IEMS was successfully reaccredited by ZEvA in Germany. In preparation for the accreditation, it was strategically decided not to change the courses per se (i.e., cancel existing and adding new courses) because a student and lecturer evaluation demonstrated a high level of satisfaction with the variety of courses on offer. Instead, the management team decided to fine tune the courses and add further

emphasis on academic quality and critical thinking. Lecturers reviewed their course descriptions and content to add further topics for class discussions and critical debate. Topics discussed in many of the courses now include multistakeholder perceptions, environmental impacts and sustainability, (legacy) issues of mega-events (including for example, "the white elephant" or the increasing societal opposition against these events), perspectives on diversity, gender, and intercultural challenges, and other contemporary issues in EM. Different perspectives on events from related disciplines (such as anthropology, psychology, or sociology) and interdisciplinary concepts (such as cocreation, service dominant logic, authenticity) have also been introduced and discussed. Research skills are actively trained in preparation for the final thesis. Students are also frequently exposed to topical scientific studies and articles from leading EM journals, which then form the basis for critical class debate (including debates on methodological approaches). One interviewee remarked:

> I think that the students are receiving a very . . . good qualification in terms of our knowledge base. It's spread across quite a number of disciplines, in organizing an event from finance to understanding the economies, to understanding how to do the planning, and the strategy aspects, to understanding cultural management, or [academic] writing.

The IEMS program has slowly left its operational focus to embrace a much more critical stance—in line with current developments and calls from leading event scholars (e.g., Barron & Ali-Knight, 2017; Getz, 2012)

IEMS' high practical approach is manifested in guest lectures by event professionals, field trips to event venues or exhibitions, and the mandatory 12-week internship. In addition, "Wonder Fair," a student-run enterprise, organizes a campus exhibition every year. Students also get actively involved in a practical event project in cooperation with an industry partner (e.g., a trade show organizer during the course "Event Simulation Training"). The participation of students in the "Future Leaders Forum" organized by IMEX (one of the leading events exhibitions) and the close relationships between IEMS lecturers and event professionals also demonstrate the high practical approach of the program.

Both students and lecturers highlighted the benefits of gaining practical experience, which corroborates previous research (Beaven & Wright, 2006; Robinson et al., 2008). Although this approach requires high administrative efforts (in line with Beer, 2008; Moscardo & Norris, 2004), the alumni agreed that the practical, hands-on experience significantly assisted in securing a job within the industry—a finding also mirrored by previous studies (e.g., Beaven & Wright, 2006).

Finally, IEMS graduates have been successful both in terms of securing goods jobs and in successfully applying for master programs at top universities worldwide. One interviewee emphasized: "We have produced wonderful graduates. Some of them have studied at top universities in the US, in Germany, or in Canada, in Hong Kong."

Remaining Challenges

Even though the quality and professionalism of the program have increased significantly over the years, several challenges continue to exist, albeit on a less problematic level. The class size still represents a challenge to the German side—but the lecturers have gotten used to it and have consequently adapted their teaching styles and formats. The English language ability "has improved tremendously" (as noted by one interviewee). However, there are still students whose level of English is of concern and who require assistance.

The limited human resources also still lead to challenges, particularly due to different foci and objectives of the leadership team of IEMS and of the universities. One participant explained:

> [The university] will for example evaluate . . . how many courses you teach. And how many papers you have published. But without all the other work involved. . . . So we need to balance how to follow these indicators and how to well organize the IEMS program. This means extra work to us.

The block classes (offered by the German side) and their integration into the "normal" Chinese class structure remain a considerable challenge. Each of these block courses includes nine blocks of 180 minutes (broken down into 4 sessions of 45 minutes), which are normally taught over 10 to 14 days. Therefore, the knowledge is delivered in

a very condensed form, which—due to the intercultural context—represents a particular challenge to the students. Other classes taught simultaneously at SUIBE often continue during this period. However, given that the HSOS lecturers are also fully incorporated in courses at their "home university," a "flying faculty" with block courses appears to be the only option at present. One lecturer emphasized that "the block lecturing is unavoidable, but it's quite a challenge."

Retaining graduates in the event industry continues to represent a major challenge due to relatively low starting salaries. One lecturer noted that "[the event] industry is not so attractive to our students because they can find better-paid jobs . . . in a financial center or with . . . banks or [other] well-paid places." These findings reflect the timely debate about remuneration in the event industry (e.g., Robinson et al., 2008). However, in contrast to most Western countries, qualified graduates with intercultural and management skills are highly sought after in China, so valuable IEMS graduates are often lost to other industries.

A final challenge pertains to the increasing amount of Chinese research articles that have been published in Chinese journals over the last years, which are cited by IEMS students in assignments and theses. This wealth of knowledge is only available in Chinese and, thus, not accessible to HSOS lecturers. One HSOS interviewee noted "this is one of the biggest challenges for IEMS. How to keep close to the developments, to the reality in China in the event business by getting information that is currently only available in Chinese."

The Future of the Program

Given the increasing competition with more and more universities offering EM programs in China, all participants agreed that continuous growth and development of the program is vital. One interviewee highlighted: "we need to be creative and try to find out new points of growth for the program . . . we still need to work hard, to keep our excellence at this high level." Another participant remarked that one of the goals should be to professionalize the program further, in particular from an academic and scientific point of view; for example, that "more lecturers on both the German and the Chinese side

have a Ph.D." Particular areas of development included the collaboration between the lecturers (especially between Chinese and German lecturers of similar fields), joint research projects and grants, and the integration of current trends and challenges (e.g., technological advances, sustainability, compliance, and security/risk management) into lectures and seminars.

In 2014, the IEMS team founded the Sino-German Event Research Institute, which aims at providing a framework for the lecturers from both universities to conduct event research of joint interest. At the same time, the first joint publication, the "Handbook Event Market China" was published (Schwägermann, Mayer, & Ding, 2016). In 2015, the members of the institute secured their first research grant and jointly worked on a research project analyzing the intention of Chinese delegates to attend congresses and exhibitions in Germany (Schwägermann, Werner, Lan, & Zhang, 2017). Several joint articles and book chapters from IEMS lecturers have been published over the last 2 years (e.g., Werner, Griese, & Hogg, 2018). This demonstrates the continuing efforts of the IEMS lecturers with diverse backgrounds and knowledge bases to enhance the interdisciplinary approach and jointly work on research projects that develop new theory and enhance scholarly debate (Getz, 2012).

Asked about the plans for the future development of the IEMS program, one SUIBE lecturer noted: "we have built up a very good teaching team and we have very good experiences in teaching EM, and we would like to set our teaching team as a model team for other universities to learn from." In a transnational context, one Chinese lecturer referred to current developments in China:

> Central government stresses more about a mutual communication, that is to say, not only to introduce things, . . . but we also need to export, to carry Chinese cultures, Chinese people's ideas about the development of industries around the world to other countries. This doesn't mean that we are going to compare to find out what is right or what is wrong . . . we have learned a lot of things from other people and we would like to produce our own ideas so we can discuss with each other and try to find a better way to build this world, to push forward the development of the economy so that everybody can benefit from it.

These findings mirror the current shift from the old stereotypical view and geopolitical configuration within TNE (Hou et al., 2014) and demonstrate the current developments in China, with new critical stances and a new self-confidence becoming increasingly prevalent.

In summary, the findings demonstrate how the program gradually matured and shifted from an operational focus—with a strong emphasis on exporting (business) event expertise from Germany to China—to its current state, embracing critical thinking and debate, varied learning (through lectures, seminars, internships, field trips), interdisciplinarity, applied theory development, research components, and effective knowledge creation (in line with the calls from Getz, 2012; Lamond & Platt, 2016; Spracklen & Lamond, 2016). However, even though great strides have been made, more work is needed in the future to reflect critical event research and theories and to truly meet what Getz (2012) coined "event studies."

Implications and Future Research

Critical event research is gaining momentum (Lamond & Platt, 2016). However, studies on how EME reflects these recent developments within curricula, courses, and single lectures and seminars as well as critical, comparative global perceptions on EME are scant. This study is one of the first studies of its kind and seeks to provide insight into these contexts. However, given the intrinsic case study approach and focus on one EM program, further studies are needed to broaden the understanding of these matters.

The study has demonstrated how the cultural differences affected the teaching and learning experience of students and lecturers, particularly in the early stages of the program. Cultural differences and misunderstandings continue to exist. Based on the interviews, one potential suggestion is to better prepare new students for their intercultural experience, for example by offering specific classes that set them up for their first "encounter" with HSOS lecturers, their different teaching styles, and cultural norms. Currently, there is a strong focus on the language skills, that is, to ensure students have sufficient English language skills before they start classes taught by HSOS lecturers.

Similarly, the findings have pointed to the need to better prepare HSOS lecturers for their intercultural teaching experience, for example through workshops or intercultural seminars that specifically cover Chinese contexts. Although all HSOS IEMS lecturers meet twice a year in Osnabrück to exchange ideas and experiences and to critically discuss and assess the program, the intercultural "preparation" could be enhanced, particularly for lecturers in the early stages of teaching within the program.

An apparent challenge for the lecturers and management team of IEMS in the future will be the balance between the universities' requirements for academic excellence (e.g., through research outputs) and the administration requirements and personal support for students. Here, the specific contexts and peculiarities of the event industry (as a very hands-on, practical industry) also play a role. Previous research has greatly emphasized the benefit of practical experience within EME (e.g., Beaven & Wright, 2006; Moscardo & Norris, 2004). This is corroborated by the industry that often criticizes the lack of practical engagement in many EM programs and at times questions the abilities of EM lecturers lacking first-hand event experience (Ryan, 2016). On the other hand, there is an increasing tendency by universities to become more "academic" in order to prove their excellence and to better address the increasing international competition between universities. The IEMS program started with many event practitioners as lecturers on both the German and Chinese side (i.e., lecturers without an "academic" career). However, there is an increasing urge by both universities to employ more lecturers with Ph.D.s—reflecting the general development. This will place considerable pressure on the management team in the future, as it is difficult to find EM lecturers with suitable practical event experience *and* academic qualities. Addressing these problems will be important for the future in order to satisfy the needs of both academia and the industry and to produce highly skilled and knowledgeable graduates who can also "help" the industry (Harris, 2004).

As discussed earlier, a large variety of TNE programs have been established over the last 15 to 20 years, with financial benefits being the main motive of many Western universities (Hou et al., 2014).

HSOS regarded the IEMS program as an interesting opportunity to become more globally active. A strong initial focus was placed on the transfer of knowledge in EM from Germany to China.

However, as highlighted by Hou et al. (2014) and also reflected in the interviews, there appears to be a current shift from old stereotypical views and geopolitical configurations. The Chinese have rightly become more conscious of their achievements and abilities and have started to think about how they can contribute to the field and inject some of their "learnings" and ideas to the Western culture. In the early years of the IEMS program, HSOS lecturers rarely had to consider Chinese event literature and practice—simply because not much existed. This situation has changed. The significant progress in China in the events domain over the last years (both theoretically and in practice) has forced HSOS lecturers to far more consider and become acquainted with the specific Chinese contexts, views, and perspectives. These developments now allow for much stronger critical debate and discussion, incorporating views and perspectives from both the "Westerners" and the Chinese at a par. However, these developments will also require both parties to newly define their ways and forms of teaching and collaboration. For example, the geopolitical boundaries of how EM is taught to students need to be clarified. Will HSOS carry on delivering the German and Western perspective on events and SUIBE the Chinese/domestic perspective? Or is there an intersection where both parties jointly want to become involved? The future will require both parties to continuously scrutinize their perspectives and stances, and to engage in discussions on what critical EME should entail and how EM should be taught to (IEMS) students—that is, discussions that are grounded in contestation on EM *education*.

Denzin, Lincoln, and Guba (2011) noted that social science needs "emancipation from hearing only the voices of Western Europe, and emancipation from seeing the world in one color" (p. 125). Similar to the tourism domain, where criticism has been raised that interpretation happens "through a tool-bag of theories conceived and re-conceived in the socio-cultural particularities of Euro-American societies" (Winter, 2009, p. 23), more studies on EM and EME from non-Western countries are needed to consider the distinctive traits of events and EME in non-Western regions (Cohen & Cohen, 2015). As outlined earlier, current debates in both Western and Chinese event research are similar; for example, the discussions about curriculum enhancement, increased cooperation between academia and practice, or the strong focus on logistical and project management aspects (e.g., Bladen & Kennell, 2014; Li & Liu, 2017). Perhaps the way ahead is not to focus too much on the differences but rather on the similarities and on the common objective of teaching EM to young people, having the great advantage to teach them from different cultural perspectives. A critical approach is important, as is communication on a par. In doing so, the synergies and advantages from both cultures can be used for the benefit of students, lecturers, and whole universities.

This study used a qualitative, intrinsic case study approach to explore social real-life phenomena. The qualitative approach has been criticized for its subjectivity and lack of replicability, generalizability, and transparency (Bryman, 2008). Although the qualitative findings of this study may not be widely generalized and applied to other EM programs (particularly due to the intrinsic case study approach) they can be applied to other situations and scenarios and can be used to inform future research (Patton, 2002).

Future studies from other universities critically analyzing their EM programs (both in national and transnational contexts) and demonstrating how they reflect critical event theories and debates within their curricula would be valuable to enhance the understanding of these contexts and to guide future critical EME research.

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