EVENT MANAGEMENT EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONALISM: THE VIEW FROM THE TRENCHES

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Little research effort has examined the perspective of those who work in the complex and rapidly growing field of event management on whether they perceive their own field as a profession, and what role event management education should play in the professionalization of the field. The purpose of this article is twofold: 1) it examines whether event management can be indeed considered as a profession based upon existing literature and the attributes of professionalism as defined by those in the events industry; and 2) it provides a unique perspective from the viewpoint of current industry leaders on whether event management is a profession, what characteristics constitute event management professionalism, and the role of event management education (academic vs. professional) in affecting the professionalization of event management. Seventeen event management industry leaders, from five continents and seven countries, provided responses to an electronic survey. The results indicate that while noticeable efforts for event management to become a fully recognized profession have been made, additional work is still needed. Namely, a joint effort is required by both industry and academia to identify commonalities and design the event management education system to better address the industry's rapidly increasing professional development needs.

Key words: Education; Event; Management; Profession; Professionalism; Professionalization

Introduction

Event management is a fast growing, yet very complex, industry (Allen, O'Toole, Harris, & Mc Donnell, 2011; Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council [CTHRC], 2011a; Getz, 2005; Goldblatt, 2011). The Convention Industry Council (CIC) (2011a) reported that in 2009 the total output impacts related to the meetings industry (considered as a single niche of the event management industry) in the US alone were estimated at $907 billion, while contributing 3.25% to the nation's total GDP. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Labor (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010a) added "event planners" to

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the "meeting and convention planners" listing in its Standard Occupational Classification (showing that even government understanding of the industry is highly limited and narrowly focused). However, using even this narrow consideration, "employment of meeting, convention, and event planners is expected to grow 44 percent from 2010 to 2020, much faster than the average for all occupations" (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2010b). The so-called MICE (meetings, incentives, conventions, exhibitions), MEEC (meetings, expositions, events, and conventions), and mega-events such as the London 2012 Olympics Games and the 2014 FIFA World Cup in Brazil are only a fraction of the dramatic field of event management. Echoing this fast growth of the event management industry, event management academic programs, as well as industry-driven professional training and certification programs, have been developing globally at a rapid pace in the past decade and the number of students desiring to study event management has drastically increased in the past few years (Cecil, Reed, & Reed, 2011; Fletcher, Dunn, & Prince, 2009; Lee, Lee, & Kim, 2008).

Given these statistics and trends, there is perhaps little doubt about event management being an increasingly well-recognized occupation. Neither is there any lack of academic studies regarding whether the complex field can indeed be considered as a profession; what constitute attributes of professionalism in event management; and what role formal event management education should play in the future development of the field (Allen et al., 2011; Cecil et al., 2011; Fenich & Hashimoto, 2010; Getz, 2005; Getz & Wicks, 1994; Goldblatt, 2011; Harris, 2004; Lee et al., 2008; Perry, Foley, & Rumpf, 1996; Silvers, 2003a). Perspectives of event management professionals on these issues, on the other hand, are not as commonly encountered.

The purpose of this study is to examine the points of view, by way of a survey, of those currently working in the field of event management on 1) whether event management is perceived as a profession and what are considered as attributes of professionalism in the field; and 2) how event education (both academic preparation and professional training/certification programs offered by the industry) can most effectively contribute to the future development of

event professionalism. This article first examines the existing literature on professions and event professionalism, which provides the basis of an analysis of the survey results. The implications of the study for the professionalization of the event management industry are then discussed.

Literature Review

The literature reviewed in this section includes several models of professionalism. Each of these models has its own set of criteria or attributes, many of which are similar to those adopted in other models. The review attempts to contrast the similarities and the differences among these models and use them as reference points when examining the views from the trenches of the event management industry revealed by the current survey.

One of the earliest works on professionalism was by Flexner (1915). While debating whether social work was a profession, he contended that "to make a profession in the genuine sense, something more than a mere claim or an academic degree is needed. There are certain objective standards that can be formulated" (p. 153). Flexner identified six criteria of professions: (1) an intellectual thinking process for problem solving; (2) a problem-solving process marked by learning, innovation, and evolvement, "which keeps professions from degenerating into mere routine" (p. 155); (3) a practical and definite purpose; (4) special knowledge and skills that can be taught and learned through a "highly specialized educational discipline" (p. 155); (5) self-organization; and (6) an altruistic motivation for its pursuit. Flexner argued that whether an occupation could make its way to a profession really depended on whether it could meet all the criteria. To him, social work along with many other occupations was not yet a profession simply because it did not meet all six criteria.

In comparison, Greenwood (1957) outlined five distinguishing attributes of a profession, namely (1) systematic theory; (2) professional authority; (3) community sanction; (4) ethical codes; and (5) a culture. The "systematic theory," which "can be achieved best through formal education in an academic setting" (Greenwood, 1957, p. 47), can be compared to Flexner's second and fourth criteria of professions.

Greenwood's second attribute of professionalism suggests that the client has to rely on the professional's judgment. This situation seems to be illuminated well by Flexner's first and second criteria, from which the client "derives a sense of security from the professional's assumption of authority" (Greenwood, 1957, p. 48). Two other attributes of Greenwood's model of profession, "community sanction" and "professional culture," address the accreditation or licensing needs of professions in order to maintain professional standards, and professions' values, norms, and symbols. These two attributes largely correspond to professions' "self-organization" depicted by Flexner (1915). Finally, to Greenwood (1957) a professional code of ethics "is perhaps more explicit, systematic, and binding; it certainly possesses more altruistic overtones and is more public service-oriented" (p. 50). This attribute of profession by Greenwood mirrors Flexner's (1915) criterion of "altruistic in motivation," which "is explicitly and admittedly meant for the advancement of the common social interest through the professional organization" (p. 156). With as many similarities as illustrated above between the two models of professions, the key difference, however, is that Greenwood (1957) did not make clear cut distinctions between occupations and professions. He maintained instead that all occupations, professional or nonprofessional, placed themselves along a continuum. "At one end of this continuum are bunched the well-recognized and undisputed professions", while "at the opposite end are bunched the least skilled and least attractive occupations" (p. 46). The rest of the occupations are distributed between the two poles. The strength of the attributes would increase or decrease as occupations move from one end to the other along the continuum. Greenwood (1957) concluded, in relation to the context of Flexner's study, that possessing all the attributes but to a lesser degree than those of medicine or law, social work was already a profession "seeking to rise within the professional hierarchy, so that it, too, might enjoy maximum prestige, authority, and monopoly which presently belong to a few top professions" (p. 54).

Greenwood's standpoint seems to be supported by J. C. Dean (1995), who also indicates that all occupations fall on a continuum that range from amateur to professional based on six basic features

first revealed by H. E. Dean (1979). These six common characteristics of professions recapitulated by J. C. Dean (1995) are (1) autonomy; (2) commitment; (3) collegiality; (4) extensive education; (5) service orientation; and (6) special skills and knowledge. "Autonomy" in this model addresses concepts such as one's exclusive right to practice, practice standards, professional–client confidentiality, and code of ethics, which echoes the two criteria in Greenwood's (1957) model, professional authority and regulative code of ethics. "Commitment" indicates that "the professional is expected to use special skills and knowledge in serving others" (J. C. Dean, 1995, p. 28). Similar connotation can be found in Flexner's (1915) "altruistic in motivation" and Greenwood's (1957) "professional culture." The functions of "collegiality" to Dean are the same as those in Flexner's "self-organization" and those in Greenwood's "professional culture." Establishing professional associations, standards of practice, and a code of ethics, so as to network with and support others in the field, seems a key common feature for all the three models of professions. Like Flexner and Greenwood, J. C. Dean (1995) also recognizes the role of education as a "basic feature" of a profession, as it is "means to build, maintain and expand standards" and enhances the "prestige and status of the profession and its knowledge base" (p. 29). He points out more clearly though that "extensive education" combines academic preparation at the university level and continuing education in the field. J. C. Dean's (1995) "service orientation" stresses that practice be guided by a code of ethics to ensure high service quality, while "special skills and knowledge" emphasizes that professionals must have special expertise for their client to rely on. Neither of these two criteria is new to the other two professions models of Flexner (1915) and Greenwood (1957).

The three models have several similar criteria. They all (1) emphasize on a special body of knowledge that grants practitioners professional authority; (2) enlist extensive education as a key instrument that leads to the achievement of professional authority; (3) recognize the critical role of a professional organization that represents, enhances, and sets standards for the profession; and (4) acknowledge the essential place of a code of ethics in the formulation of a profession. J. C. Dean (1995) further asserts that

two key factors facilitate professionalization. One is formal education, which "teaches advanced theory and practice on the foundation of basic information" (p. 30). The other is professional socialization, which establishes and promotes values, standards, certification, autonomy, commitment, collegiality, extensive education, service orientation, and special skills and knowledge among its members.

Harris (2004) labeled the type of approach to professionalism proposed by Flexner (1915), Greenwood (1957), and J. C. Dean (1995) as the "traditional approach," which either focused on common traits of professions (trait approach) or emphasized the functions and roles of professionalism accepted by society based upon its systematic knowledge, ethical behavior, and social responsibility (functionalist approach). According to Harris, the primary criticisms of the traditional approach to professionalism are that the proclaimed symbolic characteristics (traits or functions) of professionalism are often different from the reality, and that the approach is not wholly applicable to modern business. Another approach to professionalism, dubbed by Harris (2004) as the "business approach," emphasizes "sustained client relationships, people relationships, excellence in leadership and management, 'professional' work, managing the organization, and greater emphasis on running the business—concepts that are highly applicable to events management" (p. 106). Analyzing how applicable these approaches are to examining professionalism in the UK event industry, Harris pointed out that there were no industry-wide code of practice, a unifying professional association, common interests, recognition by society, and systems of rewards. She therefore argued that there needed to be an integrated, new model for a professionalized UK events industry, which combines the characteristics of both the traditional and business approaches to professionalism. The model Harris (2004) proposed "emphasizes the importance of an industry-wide code of conduct and ethics, agreement on a set of common interests that might lead to a single organization, social recognition, and enhanced reward" (p. 107). She concluded, however, that "unity and a common sense of purpose" are "the hardiest things to achieve" and "yet to emerge" (p. 107).

In an attempt to define the emerging event management profession, Getz (2000) pointed out that there exists "a large number of professional associations aimed at different aspects of the event sector" (p. 1). He emphasized the importance of developing "a common base" for the event management field, and proposed a two-tier framework for studying event management, with level one covering the nature of events and management fundamentals, and level two of the framework covering knowledge and skills that arise with specialization. He emphasizes the importance of linking event management to "the common core" knowledge areas such as planning, marketing, budgeting, people management, etc., and suggests that specialization should only "follow from a thorough understanding of the nature of events and of basic management functions" (p. 1).

Silvers (2003a) stated that "the status of event management as a profession is in progress," but "the maturity of event management as a profession . . . is, as yet, informal and inconsistent." She developed a model of the process of professionalization based on the works of Freidson (1986) and Abbott (1988), and lamented that the event management industry has failed to implement various components of the process and address the control or accountability dimension with enforceable regulations. She emphasized that for event management to attain the status as a true profession a body of knowledge must be established; an agreed-upon scope of skill competencies necessary for one to be considered qualified to practice must be identified; a reliable system of formal knowledge and its transmission must be created; a consistent method for measuring competency must be devised; and an equitable system of accountability must be developed. Only then will this occupation warrant an exclusive jurisdiction based on expert knowledge and experience—a legitimate profession (Silvers, 2003a).

Silvers (2003b) proposed an event management body of knowledge (EMBOK), which has evolved over the years into a holistic, three-dimensional, comprehensive international framework containing five knowledge domains, five phases, five processes, and five core values. The five phases and the five processes focus on the time dimension and sequential system of event management. The five knowledge domains include administration, design, marketing, operations, and risk management. The five core values, namely creativity, strategic thinking, continuous improvement, ethics, and

integration, illustrate the key principles required of the event management professional, and along with the five knowledge domains they seem to address well the attributes of professions highlighted by J. C. Dean (1995), Flexner (1915), Greenwood (1957), and Harris (2004).

Stressing that delivery of event management services must be professionally managed as the events industry and demand for its services continues to grow, CTHRC in cooperation with industry participants from 20 countries initiated a project in 2008 to develop the International Event Management Competency Framework and Standard, now known as the Event Management International Competency Standards (EMICS). The standards, which were built on the EMBOK framework, contain a comprehensive summary of the functions, tasks, and competencies required to work in event management. The standards are divided into 12 (A to L) major categories. Each of the categories contains one or more competencies. Category K of the EMICS is titled "professionalism." As shown in Table 1, the competency under "professionalism" is "exhibit professional behavior," which includes 12 subskills (CTHRC, 2011b). Each of the subskills contains a number of performance standards, as well as a number of knowledge standards underpinning the performance standards. For example, under the subskill "33.03 Demonstrate ethical behavior," there are two knowledge standards and five performance standards. There are a total of 41 knowledge

standards and 78 performance standards under the "professionalism" category of the EMICS.

The EMICS was the first set of event management competency standards to achieve industry validation on a global scale (CTHRC, 2011b). It answered the call for "a more modern business approach" (Harris, 2004, p. 106) to professions that traditional models did not fully address. For example, demonstrating leadership, time management, stress management, and working in a diverse environment among many other essential professional knowledge and skill sets were not touched on by most of the traditional models reviewed in this section. The EMICS presents a set of competencies that is fundamental to all sectors of the events industry and has the potential to be widely recognized. Meeting Professionals International (MPI) collaborated with CTHRC to build on the EMICS to establish Meeting and Business Event Competency Standards (MBECS), a comprehensive summary of knowledge and skills required of meeting and business event professionals (CTHRC, 2011a). The CIC also partnered with CTHRC and used the EMICS and the MBECS as resources when it coined the CMP International Standards (CMP-IS) (CIC, 2011b).

Consistent with the effort of defining competency standards for the event management industry, a better understanding of event management industry professionals' perspective on subjects such as criteria of event profession, features of event

Table 1
Subskills of Professionalism (Skill 33: Exhibit Professional Behavior), Event Management International Competence Standards (EMICS)

Subskills of EMICS' Professionalism Competency
33.01 Project a professional image (2 knowledge standards and 3 performance standards)
33.02 Demonstrate leadership (5 knowledge standards and 12 performance standards)
33.03 Demonstrate ethical behavior (2 knowledge standards and 5 performance standards)
33.04 Work with colleagues (6 knowledge standards and 9 performance standards)
33.05 Work in a diverse environment (4 knowledge standards and 5 performance standards)
33.06 Manage time (6 knowledge standards and 8 performance standards)
33.07 Manage stress (3 knowledge standards and 8 performance standards)
33.08 Make decision (4 knowledge standards and 5 performance standards)
33.09 Solve problem (2 knowledge standards and 10 performance standards)
33.10 Keep up to date with changes in the events industry (3 knowledge standards and 3 performance standards)
33.11 Facilitate continuous improvement (1 knowledge standards and 5 performance standards)
33.12 Participate in professional development activities (2 knowledge standards and 5 performance standards)

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professionalism, and role of event education could also help advance professionalization of the event management industry.

Methods

Relevant literature on what constitutes professions and professionalism in general, along with literature on the event management profession, was reviewed. The EMICS was also reviewed. In addition, as part of the study a qualitative survey targeted at current event management industry leaders was conducted. Sixty-seven members on the Board of Directors and the Global Roundtable Council of the International Festivals & Events Association (IFEA) were selected to participate in the survey, which was conducted by email in March 2012. All were asked to respond to five open-ended questions: (1) In your opinion, is "Event Management" today a clearly defined profession? Why or why not? (2) In your opinion, what are the key characteristics of "event professionalism"? How would you recognize it? Are there examples that you could provide to illustrate the role of event professionalism as it pertains to the success of your own event(s)? (3) In what way(s) do you believe event education (academic and/or professional) can most effectively contribute to the future development of event professionalism? (4) What role(s) should formal event education (i.e., university event management curriculum) and professional event management training provided by the event industry (i.e., event management certification programs such as the CFEE[1]; the new IFEA/NRPA[2] Event Management School; and/or online webinar training) each play and emphasize? (5) How might university/academic programs most effectively tie together with professional industry organizations like the IFEA to further the professionalism of event industry leadership in the years ahead?

A week after the first email was sent, an email reminder was sent to those who had not responded to the survey questions. Although the five open-ended survey questions were not pilot tested, they were relatively straightforwardly structured and would take about 30 minutes to an hour to respond depending on how much a respondent had to write about on each question. The survey response was grouped and coded question by question followed by

a thematic analysis. The themes across the survey questions were also categorized. The results were then interpreted using the reviewed literature as a frame of reference. Given the small size of the population, the study was exploratory in nature, examining the perspective of a less heard population on a topic of interest to the emerging field of event management. The limitation of this purposive sample consisting of only festival and event leaders who were associated with IFEA should be noted. The results are worthwhile given it was beyond the current study to generate a representative perspective from the vast and diverse event management field, but within scope to identify an agenda and opinions that may aid the development of strategies for further professionalization of the event management field. The study also provides implications for future studies on topics related to event professionalism and event management education.

Results

Seventeen (25%) of the 67 members of the Board of Directors and the Global Roundtable Council of the IFEA who were contacted responded to the email survey. The 17 respondents (13 men and 4 women) were from five continents and seven countries. They all have extensive event management experience covering the full spectrum of event management backgrounds and specialties. Their average number of years of event management industry experience was 29 years. Among them, seven were on the event management faculty of different universities and colleges. Quite a few of the respondents were well-recognized authors of and contributors to event management books, journal articles, and professional magazine articles, and almost all were involved in providing industry-based event education and training. In this section, the survey responses were analyzed question by question, summarized, and compared to the relevant existing literature.

Is "Event Management" A Clearly Defined Profession?

While the responses to this first question of the survey were mixed, as depicted in Table 2, they clearly indicated that (1) the event management

Table 2
Event Management Leaders' Perspectives on Whether Event Management Is a Profession

Clearly Defined?	Rationale
Yes/No	A modern profession is defined by a body of knowledge (CFEE and other certifications), a code of ethics, and qualifications (university degrees, etc.). . . . Within the profession it is defined, however, outwith there are many definitions and in the case of the US government, none at all. It does not exist.
	While clearly defined in itself (the act of managing an event), event management lacks clarity as a profession and gravitas . . . many people who fashion themselves as event producers . . . don't have the skill sets necessary to produce results and manage expectations within the communities served. . . . Essentially, the assumption is, anyone can do it. Since this is the perception, the reality is that they learn on the job, much to the frustration of those who they touch in the process.
	Yes, it is a defined profession (clearly is subjective). . . . When someone tells you they are an event manager, you pause . . . typically there is a discussion as to exactly what their job is . . . i.e., I run an art festival, or I plan conferences, etc.
	More clearly defined today than 10 years ago. On a scale of 1–10, it is presently a 6.5.
	Getting there. The Canadian standards (EMICS) are helping if they become fully adopted. IFEA and others are helping for there is some level of international unity. More ISO relevance would help but there are so many standards in other professions that relate to event management that it's a bit of nonsense.
	The process has started—the International EMBOK—Event Management body of Knowledge—has been a good start to the process. However, without a "common language" (event organizer/event planner/event manager/event coordinator), and in the absence of professional bodies for event management, which could bring event industry associations together, there is still a fierce "protection of turf"—with industry associations—but it is in the commonality that the role of the "event manager" is professionalized.
No	Too many types of events all under the same banner. "Event management" is better redefined into several categories such as "meeting & convention management," "festival & community event management," "sports event management," etc.
	Is not as clearly defined as other professions from the standpoint that there is not one widely accepted body of knowledge with competency assessment tools or accepted standards that apply to all types of event management.
	So many categories in the industry . . . somewhat challenging . . . perhaps rethinking where the basic educational training is best suited.
	It is all over the board—(from) a caterer to . . . (those who) manage the Super Bowl. Not defined and over inclusive.
	Event management is not a clearly defined profession—and it probably never will be! For one, the word "event" (in a European context) covers everything from large city celebrations down to a 2-hour sales promotion gig for a new cereal in a supermarket. Moreover, event management covers so many professional skills that are professions in their own right, from accounting to technical production, that any attempt to define it immediately becomes "intangible." That being said, it can be treated and taught AS IF it was a defined profession, as many of the skills needed can be broken into a number of specific learning areas.
	It is still quite amorphous. Impressions of event management run the gamut from wedding planners to corporate meetings to major events. We are better defined by "public" event management.
	There are so many different forms of "event management," and . . . everyone thinks they are so different, even though the same skill set is crucial.
	It is not clearly defined as yet as the profession is based on the end product—the event and not the process to deliver the product—the management. The plethora of "product" associations is an example of this immaturity.
	There are no clearly defined standards as to what constitutes an event manager. Many different entities and people have varying opinions of what the profession is ranging from party planners who specialize in children's birthday parties to fully trained professionals such as those that produce major world class festivals and events. Even academics disagree as to what constitutes the profession.
	It is not yet a profession; however, . . . achieving professional status is merely a function of time.
	With the varied standards found in event management and not enough formal awareness of the trade, the perception is that it is NOT a defined profession.

industry is broad and complex; (2) there is still a lack of clarity for the industry to be considered as a profession; at most it may be considered as a profession within the industry itself, but it is not yet recognized formally or understood by general society; (3) there is not yet a universally accepted body of knowledge, though progress has been made towards that end; (4) there is a large number of event industry associations, but not one that can unify all segments of the industry (e.g., festivals, conventions, sporting, events, weddings, etc.); and (5) there is not yet a set of universally accepted professional standards, though progress has also been made in this area.

Although there was lack of consensus on whether event management can indeed be considered as a profession, there seemed to be little doubt that fully achieving that status is "merely a function of time," and it is evident that event management has emerged to move rapidly towards the well-recognized and undisputed profession end of the occupation–profession continuum (J. C. Dean, 1995; Greenwood, 1957). The development and propagation of EMBOK and EMICS demonstrate strong evidence of the professionalization of the event management field as cited in the survey responses.

The Key Characteristics of "Event Professionalism"

In response to the second question of the survey, the respondents generated a long list of key characteristics of event professionalism. In a parallel track to their professional counterparts involved in the creation of the new EMICS, as developed by the CTHRC (2011b), virtually all of the 17 survey respondents from seven countries (excluding Canada), when defining the key characteristics of "event professionalism," rolled up to at least one, and often multiples, of the 12 subskills (see Table 1) defined under the heading of "Professionalism" in the EMICS. Harris (2004) was right that the traditional models of professions such as J. C. Dean (1995), Flexner (1915), and Greenwood (1957) were insufficient in capturing the new set of knowledge and skills emphasized by today's professionals, such as creativity, forward thinking, leadership skills, ability to set goals and build a business plan, client satisfaction, having a sense of humor, being flexible,

etc. The EMBOK and the EMICS, on the contrary, have tremendous strengths in covering these business-oriented skills. The survey results were consistent with the findings of Beaulieu and Love (2004), whose study cited organizational, detail oriented, communication, negotiation, flexibility, multitasking, creative thinker, financial/budgeting, etc., among the top skills that meeting planners thought they should have. Their study also shows that more than half of their survey respondents agreed that a college degree was appropriate for a career in meeting planning while 73% of them possessed either an undergraduate or graduate degree.

The Roles of Event Education in Enhancing Event Management Professionalism

Questions 3 and 4 of the survey are very closely related. One asks how event education can most effectively contribute to the future development of event professionalism, and the other asks what role(s) formal event education (by tertiary institutions) and professional event management training by the events industry each should play and emphasize. It cannot be mistaken that all of the respondents from the sample seemed to agree that event management education could play a significant role in the development of event professionalism. There was a clear emphasis on the role of event management education in providing "the basics," "the foundation," "a solid set of business skills," "the required skill set," "core competencies," and "a combination of theory/professional skills" to professionals. Examples given to illustrate this emphasis included accounting, art, business planning, communications, creative writing, decision making, finance, human relations, leadership, management, marketing, media, operations, politics, profit and loss, research, sales, social media, strategic planning, and so on. More specialized skills such as board relations, community building, concessions, fundraising, music, sports, sponsorship, volunteer management, wedding planning, etc., were also brought up. These findings are consistent with the subjects identified in the two-tiered conceptual framework for event management by Getz (2000). The majority of the respondents in the current study also stressed on "hands-on learning opportunities," "hands-on internship," "industry-based training and

mentoring," allowing students for "industry attachment," "behind the scenes," and "organizing their own events parallel to an academic course" as critical components of event management education. Hands-on event experience appears to be a critical element of event management education that the respondents argued both students and instructors should have. These suggestions seem relevant as experiential learning has been found to be effective in event management education (McDonald & McDonald, 2000). The festival and event management leaders represented in the current survey also viewed industry standards, competency assessment, best practices, trends, and partnership between industry and academia to be integral parts of event management education.

The event management industry leaders in the sample all seemed to agree that event management education should provide both foundational and specialized skill sets. The continued development of event management education in both academic and industry settings was also deemed as essential. Their opinions clearly deviated, however, when it came to what role university event management curricula and professional event management training programs each should play. These views can be summarized into the following three representative types. The first type of view proposed that university event management programs should focus on general liberal arts degree subjects and basic business skills such as accounting, planning and organization, communications and persuasion, media, social media, etc. These academic programs should provide students a jump start into the field and serve as a recruiting ground for the industry. Professional event management education provided by the event industry, on the other hand, should provide training and certification programs focusing on more specialized skills such as planning and production, site planning, sponsorship, event marketing, food and beverage management, etc. The second type of view indicated that event management education programs must understand their limitations, not assuming that all aspects of event management can be taught. For example, event planning can be taught, but event implementation must be "done." It was suggested that universities should change their curriculum title to "event studies." All courses that purport to teach "event management" must

be tied closely to practitioners. This view left the impression that event management education at the academic level should better be kept at a theoretical level, while application of theory should be left to industry-based training. The third perspective was consistent with the first two views on the grounds that universities should provide an introduction to the profession and include the basics, experiential opportunities, networking with practitioners, etc., in their event management curriculum. It stated, however, that professional event management training and certification programs offered too many basic educational classes compared to real networking, research symposiums, cohort strategy sessions, and the like. It was also argued that industry certification programs should not overly focus on education but more on evidence of production and validation of experience. Interestingly, a study of Korean event stakeholders revealed that event industry professionals identified event planning and operations, business administration, sponsorship and marketing, and field experiences as the most important curriculum dimensions, although it was not specified whether these topics were better learned at the university level or through industry-based training (Lee et al., 2008). Sperstad and Cecil (2011) emphasized the importance of bridging the gap between higher education and industry and encouraged academics in meeting and event education to align their curriculum to the EMICS and MBECS, so as to generate graduates more prepared for a successful career in the meeting and event management marketplace.

The Relationship Between University Programs and Professional Industry Organizations

Building effective ties between university/academic event management programs and professional industry organizations to further the professionalization of the event management industry was perceived to be mutually beneficial. The survey results indicated that university event management programs, when structured appropriately, could play a critical role in meeting the present and future professional development needs of the event management industry, while professional industry organizations such as IFEA could pinpoint industry's professional development needs. It was suggested

that tertiary institutions and industry associations should work together to identify commonalities and then explore needs and resources. Other strategies provided by the respondents for most effectively tying academia to industry included using certified professionals as adjunct faculty and guest speakers, attending conferences of professional organizations, using EMICS standards to provide a structured planning methodology, and using professional organizations for research support and trends studies. Most of the suggestions provided by the sample focused on strategies for strengthening the partnerships from the industry's perspective, as shown in Table 3.

These expected functions of professional industry organizations can be summarized with the acronym SPECIAL: (1) strategic alliances between tertiary institutions and industry associations; (2) professional development opportunities for faculty, students, and professionals; (3) education—joint curriculum design and program development; (4) certification; (5) internship, mentoring, networking; (6) accreditation—provide accreditation to university event management programs to ensure standards and quality; and last but not least (7) leadership—industry should take the lead in these educational efforts.

Discussion and Conclusion

Little research effort has been made to examine the perspective of those who work in the complex and growing field of event management on whether they perceive their own field as a profession, what characteristics constitute event management professionalism, and what role event management education should play in the professionalization of the field. This study was undertaken to explore the views of event management leaders, in light of the existing literature on these issues. The study results indicate that for some event management leaders, the event management field is still not yet a fully recognized profession. This is largely due to the fact that the field is so broad and complex, and falls short on some criteria specified by some traditional models of professions such as a universally recognized body of knowledge, a universally recognized industry umbrella organization, clear education

standards, and a clearly delineated event management education system that meaningfully links event management education programs offered by tertiary institutions and those provided by the event management industry. This situation is not unique to the event management field. All professions have likely gone through the growing pains that event management is experiencing as it formalizes. There should be no denial that event management needs to do a better job of defining itself clearly to those who may choose the profession in the future, but there appears to be little disagreement that the process for changing the status has long been initiated, and much ground has been gained. In fact, the event management industry has been growing so rapidly that for many there is no doubt that it "is transforming into an established and recognized profession" (CTHRC, 2011b). The development of EMBOK and EMICS, the increasing number of university event management curricula and industry-based professional training and certification programs, a large number of publications in the field, and increasing awareness of the requirements of a profession and emphasis on continuing professionalization of the field, among others, are all strong evidence of event management professionalization. Measured by the traditional criteria of professions, the event management industry has gained much momentum on corporate social responsibility and sustainable event management. The most recent London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, for example, were planned using ISO 20121, a new international sustainable standard for events (London Organising Committee of the Olympic Games and Paralympic Games, 2009). The event management industry's certification programs, such as Certified Festival and Event Executive (CFEE), Certified Special Events Professional (CSEP), Certified Meeting Professional (CMP), Certification in Meeting Management (CMM), etc., have had much effect on the professionalization of the event management field (Allen, et al., 2011; CIC, 2012; Fletcher et al., 2009; Getz, 2005; Goldblatt, 2011; IFEA, 2012; International Special Events Society [ISES], 2012; MPI, 2012). Research also indicates that those with appropriate certification tend to reap in more in rewards (Buck, 2011). With festivals, fairs, theme parks, conventions, meetings, weddings, music

Table 3

Event Management Leaders' Perspective on How to Tie Academia and Industry for Professionalization

Strategies for Professional Industry Organizations

Strategic Alliances
1. Formalize and embrace strategic alliances with tertiary institutions.
2. Create and promote values for being associated with industry such as through accreditation, certification, or co-certification programs, industry research.
3. Co-host professional development
4. Assign faculty to board of directors of professional organizations.
5. Consider forming student chapters of industry associations.

Professional Development
6. Help educators help train our future professionals.
7. Insist that faculty volunteer to work at an event each year.
8. Support research effort such as hosting research symposiums that focus on applied research to make sure it is relevant to event delivery and encourage academics to attend.

Educational Opportunities
9. Jointly provide combined academic credited courses with professional certification courses.
10. Continue to raise the bar in education by providing accreditation to university event management programs to ensure standards and quality.
11. Take advantage of the opportunity to help jumpstart careers and get students off in the right direction.
12. Jointly provide combined academic credited courses with professional certification courses.

Certification
13. Continue to raise awareness of the professional industry organizations and their professional certification programs such as CFEE.
14. IFEA certification of university programs would be interesting to pursue, both from IFEA's and the universities' standpoint. With a "little" effort, I am sure that we (IFEA) could—subject by subject, skill by skill—come up with a set of teaching goals/topics/criteria that universities would need to (document that they) adhere to in order to achieve an IFEA-certified event education.

Internships, Jobs, Mentoring, Networking, Recruiting
15. Provide hands-on experiences, internship, networking opportunities to students.
16. Work with academics to create mentoring programs.
17. Student professional membership needs to be supported with specific programming for students at professional industry organization's annual meeting.
18. Continue to encourage students to join professional industry organizations and participate in their conferences and other programs.
19. Create a database of internship and mentoring opportunities with established events and event managers that requires commitment (e.g., who would be willing to take interns and who would be willing to pay the interns and students for their time) from professional organization members. Promote the database through personal correspondence to relevant heads of university departments.

Accreditation
20. Jointly provide combined academic credited courses with professional certification courses.
21. Include an IFEA accreditation as it adds value to students and ensures the qualification in connected to the profession.

Leadership
22. Take the lead in helping develop the curriculum model for tertiary institutions to make sure it is grounded, practical, evidence-based and relevant to the industry need.

concerts, sports, holiday celebrations, political gatherings, birthday parties, art exhibits, cultural exchanges, parades, military reviews, air shows, and so on, event management is like a priceless jewel with many facets; each one cut slightly different, but no less important to the value of the whole. The nature of the event management field may be compared to siblings. They all take great pride in the differences that make them unique, but they have no desire to be roomed with their half-brother or sister. Their greatest commonality, though, is the lives the industry touches. This is no different than other professions and industries. Not everyone in the medical profession is a heart surgeon. Pharmacists don't attend the same conventions as dentists. Similarly, there are multiple degrees and majors under similar fields of study. A business degree with a major in marketing takes a whole different route than one

with a major in human resources, but they are all part of a common profession and all provide a very important component.

Perhaps the biggest hurdle to get beyond is to understand that there are very real differences between the many facets that make up the profession of event management. These differences will mean defining, creating, offering multiple academic programs; multiple certification programs; and multiple professional routes for future professionals interested in the event management field. In a day and time when technology and social media have driven home the fact that everything must be customized to reach the smallest pockets of interest, certainly event management is not the rare island that must keep searching for the one single basket that all can fit comfortably into, simply so that the industry can define itself, by a likely already antiquated system, as a profession. This will also mean that universities and other educational institutions may have to decide if they are better served by focusing on one facet of the industry or by building and investing in the capabilities to serve multiple facets. Either way, everyone is likely to be better served than by continuing the attempt to be all things to all audiences.

To J. C. Dean (1995), the role of educators (academia) and the role of the profession (industry) were very similar—that is, to teach professionals knowledge, skills, values, and professional identity and behavior. "Academic preparation in the university setting is based on a recognized need for study of theory and the building of knowledge through long, intensive study" (p. 29). Greenwood (1957) contended that "on-the-job training through apprenticeship, which suffices for a nonprofessional occupation, becomes inadequate for a profession. Orientation in theory can be achieved best through formal education in an academic setting" (p. 47). As one respondent in the study states, although the majority of successful event managers are not the products of a formal event education program, the time has come for this field to become more defined as an educational opportunity.

The results of the current study may serve as the basis of more expanded future studies. For example, using a representative sample of the event management field a multivariate analysis (e.g., a factor analysis) could be performed to identify new criteria of event management profession and new common

features of event professionalism. Future studies could also be designed to clearly differentiate the role played by tertiary event management education and that of industry-based training programs.

As for the most effective ways event management education can contribute to the professionalization of the event management field, the study shows that event management leaders believe that the joint effort by tertiary institutions and the profession must be made with the latter taking the lead in clearly determining the roles of each partner, helping design event management curriculum at tertiary institutions, offering accreditation and certification program opportunities and encouraging participation by providing meaningful incentives, and providing professional development, internship, and mentoring opportunities. More time should be spent on working in a concerted effort—profession and academia—identifying and developing concrete methods for turning many of the currently "untrackables," "uncalculatables," "countless," "vast," and "endless" words in the professional vocabulary into realistic figures, accountable and credible data, and globally accepted, cost-effective methods that make all partners better at what they do, leaving no doubt as to the value of the events industry.

Notes

[1]CFEE is an acronym for Certified Festival and Event Executive, which is a festival and event professional certification program administered by IFEA.

[2]NRPA stands for National Recreation and Parks Association.

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