Working Together to Achieve Common Goals: the role of University Industry Collaboration in the professionalisation of the event industry

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It is often reported that the relationship between Event Management Education (EME) and the event industry is limited, with EME being accused of failing to provide students with the necessary skills and knowledge to operate within this dynamic and complex industry. However, as Jiang and Schmader (2014) argue, when structured appropriately, EME programmes can play a crucial role in meeting the present and future professional needs of industry. Drawing upon the findings of a series of qualitative semi-structured interviews undertaken with academics from a range of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) from across the UK this paper explores the complex relationship that exists between EME and the event industry.

The paper argues that both EME and the event industry are at a pivotal point in their development, heightened by external environmental factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit and cost of living crisis, all of which present significant challenges as they attempt to redevelop and reposition themselves in a vastly changed global environment. In the increasingly volatile environment in which EME and the event industry are operating, this paper proposes that the two areas are increasingly reliant upon one another, with collaboration offering a means of securing short-term survival and long-term sustainability.

The paper specifically focuses on the role of University Industry Collaboration (UIC) in teaching and learning, with it being argued that UIC occurs in two mutually reciprocal ways. Firstly, the integration of EME into industry is explored with it being found that as graduates enter the workplace this raises awareness of EME, contributes to professionalisation of the industry and encourages greater linkage between HE and industry as alumni are engaged in EME provision. Secondly, the integration of industry into EME is examined, with it being found that as industry enters EME, this helps to ensure the relevance of provision, prepares students for the workplace and thus underlines the importance of EME as a stand-alone subject area and the contribution that it can make to professionalisation of the industry. Based on these findings a model of cyclical development (Flinn, 2023) is proposed, highlighting the symbiotic relationship that exists between EME and the event industry, where each is reliant upon the other to gain legitimacy, drive professionalisation and thus secure their future sustainability.

References
