

Guest editorial: Special issue introduction of the value of events and events education

STEFANSDOTTIR, Katrin, WESTWOOD, Caroline, ABSON, Emma
<<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-1333-4216>>, TATTERSALL, Jane and ROWLEY, Charlotte

Available from Sheffield Hallam University Research Archive (SHURA) at:

<https://shura.shu.ac.uk/37363/>

This document is the Accepted Version [AM]

Citation:

STEFANSDOTTIR, Katrin, WESTWOOD, Caroline, ABSON, Emma, TATTERSALL, Jane and ROWLEY, Charlotte (2026). Guest editorial: Special issue introduction of the value of events and events education. *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, 17 (2), 193-197. [Article]

Copyright and re-use policy

See <http://shura.shu.ac.uk/information.html>

Guest editorial: Special issue introduction of the value of events and events education

Background to the special issue

The evolution of events management education over the past two decades reflects a dynamic and multifaceted discipline that continuously adapts to the shifting landscapes of academia and industry. As the events sector continues to grow in complexity and global significance, educational programs must evolve to prepare graduates for the diverse demands of this fast-paced field. Positioned within the context of AEME (Association of Events Management Education), this editorial focuses on the critical topics shaping events education and research today, underscoring their relevance to curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, and graduate preparedness. The special issue is a result of the annual AEME forum held at Sheffield Hallam University in July 2024, with the conference entitled “The Value of Events and Events Education – 20:20 Reflecting on the past and shaping the future” - celebrating both 20 years of AEME and 20 years of event management education.

Events management education holds substantial value in equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and competencies necessary to succeed in an industry characterized by evolving social expectations, rapid technological advancements, and increasing professionalization (Bladen *et al.*, 2022). It functions as a vital conduit between theoretical frameworks and practical application, ensuring that emerging professionals are not only grounded in foundational principles but are also agile and innovative in their approach to event design, delivery, and evaluation. This ongoing evolution reflects broader societal trends and industry transformations, making continuous curricular renewal essential to maintaining relevance and impact (Bowdin *et al.*, 2023).

Four of the five articles within this special issue focus on good practices where students experience practically applying their theoretical learning through industry-based assessments. The golden thread, in these articles, is their illustration of the demands of events educators to prepare students for the challenging and exciting world of events underpinned by professional practice contexts. In line with the AEME conference focusing on a broad range of topics in relation to Events management education, the fifth article within this special issue, identifies obstacles minority students perceive within the events industry.

Synopsis of the collection of papers

Goodey, Leer and Carter state that “event management educators have a responsibility to deliver ‘work ready’ students” whilst arguing that an approach to achieving it is through using authentic assessments. Their analysis of the qualitative data identified key themes

in assessment design, technology use and industry engagement on what authentic assessments mean to UK-based events management educators. The educators agreed that an authentic assessment's aim is to develop "real-world" skills delivered practically, preferably with industry involvement, whilst enabling students to put theory into practice and develop their employability. The most common design of an authentic assessment was for students in small groups to deliver a "live" event, often a fundraising event for a charity. Other formats included consultancy projects, event proposals, crisis simulations, site plans and marketing content like social media and podcasts.

The greatest challenges when implementing authentic assessments were found by Goodey et al. to be related to, firstly, time constraints, such as limited time for educators to build relationships with industry partners and to train themselves. Secondly, lack of student engagement and thirdly, cost, particularly for implementing current event industry technologies. Building on Gulikers *et al.*'s (2004) five-dimensional framework for authentic assessment; the task, physical context, social context, assessment result or form, they propose the adaptation by adding a further dimension, "feedback from industry".

Ch'ng, Lee, Lin, and Pathan use the AFECA Asia MICE Youth Challenge 2024 as the vehicle to explore challenge-based learning, a very similar approach to authentic assessment, as it emphasizes experiential learning, interdisciplinary collaboration, and real-world problem solving. They however explored the students' perception of participating in the challenge, within which they submitted an event proposal that included elements such as event concepts, commercial viability, logistics, and destination marketing. A mixed-methods approach is adopted, analysing students' quantitative survey responses and focus groups along with educators' reflections. The data revealed that the students benefitted from the challenge-based learning approach and were positive towards it. Participation in the challenge was found to be beneficial for developing core competencies through collaboration with industry professionals, having the autonomy to shape the delivery of the event and engaging in reflective discussions. Challenges in relation to communications and role clarity were identified.

Lee also explores how to use industry connected assessments to enhance students' industry readiness, in particular how experiential learning influences event management students' well-being across positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment (PERMA) dimensions. In line with the approach in the articles discussed earlier, students who had planned and implemented a "live event" within their degree programme participated in the mixed-method study, based on their learning experience.

Lee's analysis not only demonstrated the importance of experiential learning, in line with Goodey et al. and Ch'ng's findings, but also the significant influence it has on the student's overall wellbeing. Her results suggests that experiential learning both enhances the students' engagement with the learning process as well as fostering better relationships and increase positive emotions. In addition, the learning increased their

confidence and provided inspiration for further personal growth in areas of creativity, communication and collaborative work, all essential for a successful career within events management.

The effectiveness of the experiential learning approach is demonstrated by Henderson and Shipway through a practical application of Lego® Serious Play®. In a workshop setting, students engage in building with Lego bricks thereby illustrating their employability skills, including decision-making, opportunity awareness, evaluation, reflection and self-presentation whilst simultaneously enhancing their self-efficacy. The students expressed high levels of satisfaction with the workshop noting that its creative, immersive and interactive nature facilitated the realization and communication of their employability skills. The value of the workshop, emerged as six themes from students' reflections: (1) Creativity and innovation, (2) Collaboration and communication, (3) Personal growth and confidence, (4) Perspective and reflection, (5) Practical skills, and (6) Enjoyment and engagement.

Lata and Jasrotia focus on diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), exploring the accessibility to enter India's events industry. Adopting a qualitative approach, they identified four obstacles minority students perceived within the industry: (1) Barriers to mentorship and advancement, (2) Workplace culture and microaggressions, (3) Access to opportunities and resources, and (4) Lack of representation and leadership roles. Lata and Jasrotia recommend that event educators support minority students in succeeding in the events industry by providing them with the resources, mentorship and opportunities that these students often find challenging to access on their own. Their recommendations to industry leaders are to prioritise DEI in their recruitment practices, organisation culture and event planning processes. They also highlight the role policymakers can play by implementing initiatives that promote diversity in the events industry.

Synthesis and proposed future directions for research

This special issue highlights the good practices within event education, providing students with learning opportunities where they can apply their theoretical learning within the real-world. These real-world application opportunities enhance the student's confidence in their own abilities and emphasis on personal growth, whilst illustrating their readiness to enter the industry. Evidence from across events (tourism and hospitality) literature consistently shows that employers place strong emphasis on students acquiring practical experience during their studies, allowing the students to develop emotional intelligence, conflict management and customer-facing confidence, areas employers say students would otherwise lack (Wyld *et al.*, 2024).

The importance of academic collaboration with industry, local and international, linking education and professional practice is illustrated throughout this special issue. Collaboration such as partnerships with event organizations, co-created content, and internships, not only ensure that programmes remain current and responsive to sector

needs (Bladen *et al.*, 2022), but also enhances student employability through real-world insights and professional mentorship. The continuation of examining models of industry engagement, that is academically rigorous and aligned with industry standards (Venske, 2021) to support curricula development, is essential. Further research could support advancement of knowledge on how to overcome the challenges Goodey *et al.* discuss of the time and energy this requires from the educators.

The papers emphasised the industry collaborations in assessments through experiential learning with authentic assessments that have multiple beneficial outcomes, including creativity, collaboration, relationship, practical skills, enjoyment and engagement with the learning experience. Students' digital literacy is emphasised as well, illustrating the importance of studies on integration of innovative technologies utilised in industry into the education settings, supporting the preparation of students for a technology-driven industry whilst fostering critical thinking and adaptability (Neuhofer *et al.*, 2015). Threaded throughout the paper was also the impact of experiential learning on communication skills. It was identified that students engaging in real-world application of theoretical learning enhance their communication skills, whilst also experiencing what happens when communication goes wrong. Continued research on reflections is encouraged, not only in academic learning but also amongst events practitioners.

One of the strengths of this special issue is the international perspectives included within the articles. This is aligned with the global events industry and professionals working across borders, understanding nuances that shape event delivery in different settings (Antchak and Ramsbottom, 2019; Getz and Page, 2019). The articles within this special issue analyse data from diverse geographical areas, the UK in Europe, India, Hong Kong, and further countries in south-east Asia, reflecting the global nature of the industry. We encourage future research into event management education to include global research activities, allowing for consideration if there are regional, societal or cultural differences on the impact of learning approaches.

Student wellbeing and mental health are integral considerations within events education and the application of the PERMA framework by Lee established how the challenge-based learning supported the students' wellbeing. It is important for the curriculum to promote resilience and wellbeing whilst allowing the students to receive a flavour of the high-pressure nature of event management, with tight deadlines and stakeholder expectations (Stadler *et al.*, 2023a). Integrating wellbeing strategies into course design — including stress management and emotional intelligence — provides students with tools to maintain mental health (Kramer *et al.*, 2023). In addition to further research on students' wellbeing it is important to continue studying the wellbeing of the events workforce (Stadler *et al.*, 2023b) including the challenges and opportunities for women working in events (Abson *et al.*, 2025, 2026).

The value of events management education lies, not only in preparing competent practitioners, but also in cultivating visionary leaders capable of driving positive change

within and beyond the sector. This includes supporting the DEI practices within industry, by including and highlighting these vital dimensions within events education. Curricula addressing DEI enhance programme relevance by reflecting diverse audiences and stakeholders (Dashper and Finkel, 2020; Duffy *et al.*, 2018), including event industry practitioners. In addition, students must navigate the intersections of politics, society, and events to lead effectively (Dashper and Finkel, 2020), as understanding events as platforms for social change and cultural expression encourages socially responsible leadership (Pernecky, 2015). Furthermore, sustainability-focused curricula equip students to organize responsible events that minimize environmental impact and align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) (United Nations Tourism, 2026). These strategies foster professionals committed to balancing economic viability with ethical imperatives (Baxter and Gallagher, 2024).

This editorial has aimed to advance discourse on key topics which foster scholarship that informs the continuous transformation of events management education. By addressing experiential learning, industry collaboration, digital innovation, global perspectives, wellbeing, DEI, socio-political contexts, and sustainability, it provides a comprehensive framework for educators and researchers committed to shaping a resilient, inclusive, and forward-looking discipline.

References

- Abson, E., Kennell, J., Haynes, N., Rowley, C. and Frew, E. (2026), "It's Not You, It's Me—Women's Denial of Gendered Inequalities in the Event Industry", *Gender, Work & Organization*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 27–40, doi: 10.1111/gwao.70021.
- Abson, E., Kennell, J., Rowley, C., Haynes, N. and Frew, E. (2025), "The Triple Threat to Women's Leadership Development in Events: A Gendered Organization Perspective", *Tourism and Hospitality Research*, p. 14673584251406884, doi: 10.1177/14673584251406884.
- Antchak, V. and Ramsbottom, O. (2019), *The Fundamentals of Event Design*, 1st ed., Routledge, Abingdon, Oxon; New York, NY: Routledge, 2020., doi: 10.4324/9781351142083.
- Baxter, D. and Gallagher, C. (2024), "Making events more sustainable", *The Routledge Handbook of Events and Sustainability*, 1st ed., Routledge, London, pp. 111–123, doi: 10.4324/9781003269311-13.
- Bladen, C., Wilde, N., Kennell, J. and Abson, E. (2022), *Events Management: An Introduction*, 3rd ed., Routledge, London, doi: 10.4324/9781003102878.
- Bowdin, G., Allen, J., O'Toole, W. and Harris, R. (2023), *Events management*, 4th ed., Butterworth-Heinemann, Oxford, doi: 10.4324/9781003044963.
- Dashper, K. and Finkel, R. (2020), "Accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in the UK meetings industry", *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, Vol. 21 No. 4, pp. 283–307, doi: 10.1080/15470148.2020.1814472.
- Duffy, M., Mair, J. and Waitt, G. (2018), "Addressing community diversity: The role of the festival encounter", in Finkel, R., Sharp, B. and Sweeney, M. (Eds.), *Accessibility, Inclusion, and Diversity in Critical Event Studies*, 1st ed., Routledge, doi: 10.4324/9781351142243.
- Getz, D. and Page, S.J. (2019), *Event Studies: Theory, Research and Policy for Planned Events*, 4th ed., Routledge, Abingdon, doi: 10.4324/9780429023002.
- Gulikers, J.T.M., Bastiaens, T.J. and Kirschner, P.A. (2004), "A five-dimensional framework for authentic assessment", *Educational Technology Research and Development*, Vol. 52 No. 3, pp. 67–86, doi: 10.1007/BF02504676.
- Kramer, S.K., Liu-Lastres, B., Cecil, A. and Shonkwiler, E. (2023), "A post-pandemic reflection of the changing role of contemporary event professionals: Implications for event professionals and higher education", *Journal of Convention & Event Tourism*, Vol. 24 No. 4, pp. 411–431.
- Neuhofer, B., Buhalis, D. and Ladkin, A. (2015), "Smart technologies for personalized experiences: a case study in the hospitality domain", *Electronic Markets*, Vol. 25 No. 3, pp. 243–254, doi: 10.1007/s12525-015-0182-1.
- Pernecky, T. (2015), "Sustainable Leadership in Event Management", *Event Management*, Vol. 19 No. 1, pp. 109–121, doi: 10.3727/152599515X14229071393188.
- Stadler, R., Walters, T. and Jepson, A. (2023a), "Staying Sane, Safe and Well in the Events Industry", *International Case Studies in Event Management*, 1st ed., Routledge, London, pp. 200–208, doi: 10.4324/9781003390381-25.
- Stadler, R., Walters, T. and Jepson, A.S. (2023b), "'Work it, work it non-stop' – Event industry employees' unconscious application of the *Five Ways to Wellbeing*", *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, Vol. 14 No. 1, pp. 41–55, doi: 10.1108/IJEFM-07-2022-0057.

- United Nations Tourism. (2026), "Tourism 4 SDs", *UN Tourism*, March, available at: <https://www.untourism.int/tourism4sdgs>.
- Venske, E. (2021), "Quality education: industry contributions to embed sustainability in a meeting and event management curriculum", *International Journal of Event and Festival Management*, Vol. 12 No. 3, pp. 297–313, doi: 10.1108/IJEFM-12-2020-0079.
- Wyld, L., Ali, N., Constantinescu, A. and Schmitz, B. (2024), *White Paper: The Future of Tourism, Hospitality and Events (THE) Education*.