A CONCEPTUALISATION OF PROFESSIONALISM IN TOURISM

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ABSTRACT

The success of the global tourism industry will ultimately depend on its professionalism (Edgell et al., 2008). Tourism professionalism is a multidimensional concept, but lacking consensus on its dimensions; this paper addresses this issue by presenting a conceptualisation of professionalism. This paper extends Hall's (1968) early work on professionalism, which conceptualised professionalism as involving 5 dimensions. Based on the literature and the tourism context, this paper uniquely argues that there are 10 discriminant dimensions of professionalism. It is perceived that the authors' study on tourism professionalism will make a significant contribution to the focalised knowledge streams and provide transitional countries with insights into their support, for example, through educational interventions.
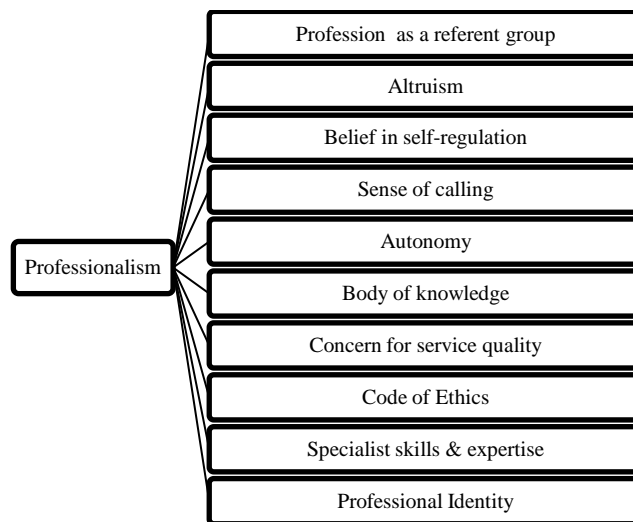
Keywords: Professionalism, Conceptual framework, Tourism Education

INTRODUCTION

This paper originates in the context of growing recognition that the success of the global tourism industry will ultimately depend on the professionalism of its workforce (Edgell et al., 2008). Further, the need for enhanced levels of professionalism is not confined to the transitional countries, as Esichaikul and Baum (1998), in a Thai context, suggested that the lack of professionalism would ultimately impact on the growth of tourism in that country. Similarly, in Hong Kong, Ap and Wong (2001) raised their concerns that the levels of professionalism in the tour guiding sector were not up to international standards, leading to complaints from customers, damaging the perceptions of the quality and image of the destination, to the long-term detriment of the region. For transitional countries, the need for guidance on the development of professionalism is all the more critical, as other destinations have structures already in place to support the development of elements of professionalism (cf. Baum, 2007; Airey & Tribe, 2005).

Although there is a general academic consensus that professionalism is a prerequisite for success (cf. Smith and Westerbeek, 2004), a review of the literature indicates that there is both a scarcity of knowledge on what tourism professionalism is and a lack of consistency in its use and meaning. However, the unifying factor throughout the literature is that, given the criticality of the human factor in tourism, professionalism ultimately impacts on the innovation, competitiveness, destination development, growth and success of the tourism industry (Sundbo et al., 2007; Esichaikul and Baum, 1998; Braun and Hollick 2006). A review of the literature also highlights that professionalism as a concept "has not commonly been addressed and, when it has, it has usually been concerned with broad assumptions and sociological interpretations" (Smith and Westerbeek, 2004: 39). Indeed, the seminal work in this field on dimensionalising professionalism was completed by Hall (1968) some time ago and has received very little attention since, especially in a tourism context. Hall (1968) developed an instrument to measure professionalism which assessed the following five traits: (1) use of the professional organisation as a major referent group, (2) belief in public service, (3) belief in self-regulation, (4)

sense of calling to the field, and (5) a feeling of autonomy. This paper reviews the relevance of each of these dimensions in turn before providing an argument for the addition of the following dimensions in a conceptualisation of professionalism in a tourism context: (1) a body of knowledge requiring extensive education and/or socialization, (2) a concern for quality service, (3) a code of ethics, (4) development of specialist skills, and (5) professional identity (self-awareness based on reflective practice); see Figure 1 overleaf. By examining the ten proposed dimensions of this concept, it is perceived that this paper will make a significant contribution to the focalised knowledge streams and provide a starting point for discussion as to how professionalism may be enhanced in the transitional countries' respective tourism sectors. In the subsections to follow, each of the dimensions is examined in turn, starting with the use of the profession as a major referent group.

| Professionalism |

| Profession as a referent group |
| Altruism |
| Belief in self-regulation |
| Sense of calling |
| Autonomy |
| Body of knowledge |
| Concern for service quality |
| Code of Ethics |
| Specialist skills & expertise |
| Professional Identity |

Figure 1: A Conceptualisation of the Dimensions of Professionalism

Use of the Profession as a Major Referent Group

As indicated previously, considerable work in the professionalism area has originated from sociology and, specifically in this context, the study of groups such as the guilds of the middle-ages (Hamilton, 2001). The guilds were the original professional organisations, and acted as guiding lights in respect of developing tacit knowledge and standards of production across a profession (preserved through apprenticeships for members) (Hamilton, 2001). Over time, this influence has changed from an emphasis on the physical product, to an emphasis on professional attitudes, and means and manner of thinking – preserved and replicated through professional associations or organisations determining the educational or training credentials required for membership of the profession. For instance, Hall (1968) referred to how professional organisations reinforce the values, beliefs and identity of the profession; but this dimension is more than these aspects, it is an awareness of others or "colleague consciousness" (Gross, 1958: 79). The literature suggests that this colleague consciousness orientation can be promoted through attendance at professional meetings and reading professional journals (Hall, 1968; Snizek, 1972). Further, Shafer et al. (2002) referred to this dimension as "professional community affiliation", and explained it as the extent to which a person is actively involved in the professional community. A sense of affiliation can be promoted through professional discourse, as a new member becomes familiar with the professional terminology and vocabulary, and becomes an active member of the professional community. In turn, Gleeson et al. (2005) referred to professionalism as a situated activity embedded in a community of practice (COP)(Lave and Wenger, 1991), highlighting the role played by established professionals in developing the abilities of novice professionals in an industry. The COP's concept also captures the necessary socialisation process involved in the development of professionals, which enhances the individual's sense of belonging to a wider community or group. Including this dimension in the conceptualisation of professionalism reflects both the individual's acceptance of a reference group as a source of information for practice and their awareness of *not* operating in isolation. This has implications for the individual tourism owner-manager, who, by becoming part of the community, benefits from the knowledge of and expertise of peers, gains a sense of what is acceptable (closely related to the code of ethics as detailed in a later section) and also a sense of being part of a fraternity of professionals.

The foregoing 'colleague consciousness' is very relevant in the context of the Irish tourism industry, which has been characterised as fragmented and composed mainly of a heterogeneous mix of geographically dispersed,

micro and small enterprises (MSEs)(Travers et al., 2004), operating in isolation from each other, thereby lacking colleague consciousness. However, this isolation is not distinctive to Ireland (see Morrison, 1998 in a Scottish context, or Sparks and Malady,2006 in an Australian context), and oftentimes the dominant MSE owner-managers do not even consider themselves part of the industry, as its boundaries are not clear-cut (Braun and Hollick, 2005). This issue is further aggravated by the multi-product character, complexity and the nature of the activities making up the 'mix' of tourism services (Huybers, 2007; Singh, 1997); the foregoing militates against a sense of community or reference group, which is further exacerbated by the highly competitive nature of the industry. However, if professionalism levels are to be developed, a sense of affiliation to the community must be addressed at an individual tourism owner-manager level. Furthermore, the literature suggests that other than reading professional journals and attending conferences, one possible solution to the isolation is through the development of tourism networks to create a sense of community and an awareness of peer groups (see Morrison, 2004). By highlighting how networking and knowledge sharing between tourism operators is essential to successful tourism clusters and destination development (Braun and Hollick, 2006), individual owner-managers may perceive an advantage for themselves in joining the wider tourism community and thereby enhance their professionalism. Indeed, developing this 'colleague consciousness' implies that the practitioner will be influenced by the norms and standards of their peer group, resulting ultimately in better service delivery. Furthermore, by gaining exposure to other tourism professionals, and using them as a point of reference, it will counteract the tendency in small business operations towards a "limited rationality" and facilitate "the diffusion of a genuine entrepreneurial spirit and rigorous professionalism", to the benefit of innovation across the industry (Decelle, 2003: 12). This suggests that a sense of colleague consciousness should be promoted at an individual owner-manager level in the transitional countries, promoting their sense of affiliation to the wider community of tourism professionals through networks, professional associations and organisations, in order to reap the benefits of learning about professional practice through 'legitimate peripheral participation' (Lave and Wenger, 1991) and growing involvement in the community.

Altruism

Reflecting the medical origin of much of the literature surrounding professionalism, altruism is often cited as a characteristic of the professions; it is described by Monroe (1998: 5) as entailing action or "behaviour intended to benefit another, even when this risks possible sacrifice to the welfare of the actor". The idea of the practitioner lead by a belief in self-sacrifice is referred to in many descriptions of professionalism (Wilensky, 1964; Kuhlmann and Bourgeault, 2008). Originally, Hall (1968) referred to this component as a belief in the indispensability of the profession, based on its contribution to society, but it is also often closely associated with the need for high levels of trust, honesty and integrity inherent in the relationship between the professional and their client, due to the nature of professional practice; as expressed by Becker (1970: 95), "If the client is to trust the professional completely he [*sic*] must feel that there are no other interests which will be put before his in the performance of the professional activity". Given the intangibility of most tourism services, the development of trust is critical. However, Ginsburg et al. (2004) highlighted the difficulties in developing this highest of ideals, and also in assessing its pro-social application. Furthermore, Cohen (2006: 609) suggested "living up to professionalism's core expectation to subordinate self-interest in deference to the interest of others has always required the surmounting of formidable challenges, not least of which is overcoming human nature itself." Consequently, strong socializing influences are required to influence the behaviour of the professionals, and academia has a vital role to play in this process of promoting and sustaining professionalism (Cohen, 2006).

In the higher education context, there is growing recognition of the importance of active citizenship, as Maher (2004: 48) argued that "relevant professional skills and personal qualities, formerly seen as by-products of the educational process, are now regarded as a core part of studying for a degree". Altruism is just one of these values which higher education must promote; academia must also promote "values akin to a high level of professionalism, a much desired characteristic within the tourism and hospitality industry if it is to be credible and reputable" (Lee-Ross and Pryce, 2010: 126). Indeed, the growing literature on corporate social responsibility (CSR) (e.g. Miller, 2001) in tourism reflects this commitment to serve the public interest, and is highlighted by tourism professionals providing pro bono services, or supporting community initiatives. In turn, Sheldon (1989: 496) contended that "the best tourism/hospitality employees have the tourist's welfare at heart, and so their service could be called altruistic"; this has implications for the transitional countries aiming to improve this aspect of professionalism, as they should ensure that the values of the 'best' employees are advanced.

Belief in Self-regulation

Indicative of the origin of the traditional professions, such as law and medicine, this dimension of professionalism centres around the belief that the person best qualified to assess or judge the work of a practitioner is a fellow professional. As Shafer et al. (2002: 49) described it, "the fundamental rationale for self-

regulation is the belief that laypersons are not qualified to judge the quality of the professional's work; thus professionals should be judged by their colleagues (Abbott, 1988; Hall, 1968)". The belief in self-regulation is closely related to other characteristics of professionalism, that of the professional's body of knowledge and professional expertise, implying that only colleagues from within the profession would have the expertise to judge an individual's work not "outsiders" (Snizek, 1972).

In a tourism setting, few sectors have developed strong professional associations or organisations to support this form of colleague control, as a consequence, in many instances governmental bodies have played a role in regulating many aspects of tourism performance (e.g., health and safety aspects, environmental aspects). As previously indicated, many owner-managers in tourism also suffer from a lack of sufficient peer-support and, consequently, this isolation inhibits the development of strong fraternal mechanisms to deal with ethical issues or address unhealthy industry practices (Marnburg, 2006; Ap and Wong, 2001). However, this belief in self-regulation is an ideal for professionals to aspire to, and includes the view that such a practice is desirable; for instance, the common viewpoint is that the tourism industry should be more involved in shaping its own standards (see Harris and Jago, 2001), hence it has been included in this conceptualisation. Furthermore, in the context of the transitional countries, it is worth noting that the establishment of strong professional bodies is recommended to promote self-regulation, so that the individual tourism professionals retain control and authority over their work, with professional accreditation a possible option to explore (see Harris and Jago, 2001).

Sense of Calling to the Field

The history of the early professions dictates that the choice of a profession involves an integral sense of calling, for example, in the religious profession's reference to a vocation. The sense of calling is described as a commitment to the profession, and work for its own sake rather than for its instrumental value (Hall, 1968; Snizek, 1972). Accordingly, the person would choose this particular career and work even if there were fewer extrinsic rewards available (Hall, 1968). Historically, this devotion to a field or professional career, has been described with emotive terms such as "inward calling", to portray the individual's motivation towards achieving virtuous goals such as the altruism ideal mentioned earlier, rather than monetary compensation. This sense of calling is intrinsically linked to an individual professional's motivation and satisfaction with their career choice, and as "personnel are the backbone of the tourism industry" (Sheldon, 1989: 502), it has great relevance in this context. Traditionally, the tourism industry has been associated with low pay and poor working conditions (Baum, 2007). Indeed, globally the tourism industry has suffered from a failure to develop long-term progressive career prospects, due in part to an over-reliance on low-skilled, transitory positions (Baum, 2007; Koyuncu et al., 2008). Indeed, many authors have commented on the lack of adequate career paths in tourism (see Ladkin, 2005), and the need for careers that are both economically and professionally rewarding (Pollock and Ritchie, 1990; Baum, 2007). Indeed, Baum (2007: 1390) argued that "the concept of a career within the sector for all but a minority in positions of managerial responsibility is of limited and decreasing value", with few continuing education opportunities and higher labour turnover than many other service industries. If this situation is to be addressed, for the sake of the long-term legitimacy of the industry (Lee-Pryce and Ross, 2010), it will require the up-grading and up-skilling of many roles, and the development of career paths which recognise professional values and expertise. Furthermore, communicating and justifying the value contributed by tourism will be a major step towards a broader acceptance of the value of a career in tourism in transitional countries and beyond; however, it must be supported by integrity across the industry (promoted through codes of conduct, professional reference groups and altruism) and a strong culture of lifelong learning (Christou, 1999). This is all the more critical as Hjalager (2003) identified that one of the consequences of a poor perception of tourism is the loss of tourism professionals to other sectors, which is likely to continue while the career structures and long-term supports are not in place (Richards, 2006).

A Feeling of Autonomy

This dimension of professionalism refers to the practitioner's ability to dictate their own work practices independent of others and to exercise personal judgement (Lindop, 1982). A feeling of autonomy was promoted as a trait of professionalism by Freidson (1984), who contended that the control over one's own work was a defining feature of the professions. Earlier work by Hall (1968) made reference to the professional's decision-making process being free from external pressures, such as from clients, non-professional peers and one's employer. Snizek (1972) added the external influence from the State to these external pressures, which has great relevance in the context of many transitional countries, where the State traditionally played a dominant role in all aspects of society. He described this pressure that conflicts with professional judgement as the "antithesis of professional autonomy" (Snizek, 1972: 110). Autonomy, both personal and intellectual (Barrie, 2004) is promoted through the development of self-regulation and certification (see Harris and Jago, 2001), and facilitated by a professional education which stimulates critical thinking and professional artistry (Schön, 1983).

In essence, the literature suggests that professional autonomy brings creativity to situations of uncertainty and decision-making complexity (Hanlon, 1994).

In a tourism context, there is growing recognition of the need for more creativity and innovation, and this is closely associated with an entrepreneurial culture, lifelong learning (Marhuenda et al., 2004; Westcott et al., 2010) and empowerment embodied in the concept of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983). However, Ross (1997) has previously been highly critical of the tourism sector in the provision of job autonomy and learning potential; hence, this represents an area for future development in the industry, and highlights the need for both organisational supports for human agency (Kosmala and Herrbach, 2006) and governmental supports, through higher education, in particular, to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to support professional autonomy. Once again, it is apparent that higher education in transitional countries will have a major role to play in enhancing this dimension of professionalism.

Body of Knowledge

One of the traits of professionalism most frequently mentioned in the literature is that "professional practice is founded on a base of theoretical esoteric knowledge" (Johnson et al., 2006: 42), that is, knowledge only available to a select few, who are enlightened, initiated or specially educated. At its most basic level, knowledge is created by individuals (Nonaka, 1994) and "knowledge facilitates the use of other knowledge" (Powell et al., 1996: 120). Szulanski (1996) concurred with this viewpoint and added that the practitioner's ability to both value and apply the new knowledge is the key to 'best practice'. Additionally, Freidson (1970) identified this body of knowledge as made up of two elements: (i) pure knowledge and theory, and (ii) their application in practice – indeed, Schön (1983: 21) argued that "professional activity consists in instrumental problem solving made rigorous by the application of scientific theory and technique". Accordingly, Noordegraaf (2007, p.765) argued that "professionalism, then is perceived to be about applying general, scientific knowledge to specific cases in rigorous and therefore routinized or institutionalized ways". Lengthy training or socialisation processes have been identified as usually involved in the acquisition of a body of knowledge, as the professional learned how to behave competently dealing with situations of complexity and uncertainty (Fournier and Grey, 2000), with their knowledge base becoming, over time, more and more tacit (Sternberg and Horvath, 1999).

In terms of the body of knowledge in tourism, the field of enquiry has developed over the past two decades (Pritchard and Morgan, 2007; Xiao and Smith, 2006); however, "at the moment it lacks the level of theoretical underpinning that would allow it to become a discipline" (Cooper et al., 2008: 5). Similarly, Hjalager (2003: 34) referred to tourism students requiring a "very industry-specific knowledge", and highlighted the need for higher education in tourism. Tourism education at third level has traditionally been focused on vocational training in craft skills (Inui et al., 2006); but Slotte and Tynjälä (2003: 447) have highlighted that the integration of theory and practice is required for professional development and that "this integration can be achieved by engaging professionals in problem solving based on practical knowledge obtained in the workplace, real-world cases and theoretical knowledge provided by the university". In light of the foregoing, the transitional countries would be advised to pay particular attention to the development of the body of knowledge distinctive to their culture, situation and context and, furthermore, the promotion of a culture of lifelong learning (see Christou et al., 1999). Moreover, the foregoing implies that the promotion of tourism in higher education will provide a context whereby the theoretical knowledge of tourism and its application in practice can be elaborated upon, thereby ultimately enhancing the levels of professionalism across the industry.

A Concern for Service Quality

A concern for service quality or quality service orientation is an underlying element of professionalism (Wilensky, 1964; Warrior, 2002). Indeed the two concepts have been intrinsically linked by Davidson and Rogers (2006: 231) who argued that "high quality demands high levels of professionalism and productivity on the part of industry practitioners and the delivery of customer service that not only meets but regularly exceeds expectations". Hence, this service-quality orientation dimension has been included as a distinct element of professionalism, as in the context of tourism, "the consumer finds it difficult to isolate service quality from the quality of the service provider" (Enderwick, 1992: 139) and without quality the essence of professionalism is lost (Carr, 1989). Indeed, Noordegraf (2007) contended that professionalism rests on ideologies of integrity, independence, expertise and service; this implies that professionals act according to a shared "service ethic" (cf. Wilensky, 1964), driven to improve service delivery.

The concern for service quality is all the more critical in the context of the tourism industry, as it is very dependent on reputation-building given the overall intangibility of the service experience (Berry et al,2006; Harris and Jago, 2001). This implies that tourism professionals need to constantly examine their service quality,

and both reflect and interact with their clients in an ongoing dialogue concerning their needs and expectations (this reflection is closely related to the development of the professional identity, as outlined in a later section). Similarly, the tourism professional must support the ongoing development of higher levels of service quality through contact with the wider tourism community, and by supporting the exchange of expertise with other professionals, for example, as promoted through international conferences, academic exchanges, and international placements. These opportunities to gain exposure to global service quality standards and values have far reaching effects, and are of relevance to tourism professionals regardless of geographical location. The importance of professional values is explored further in the next section, which concerns the association between professionalism and a code of ethics.

Code of Ethics

Fox (2000: 70) referred to ethics as a value system, and stated that it is "the generalised principles that guide a person's evaluation of decisions or specific instances of conduct". It is appropriate at this point to distinguish between codes of conduct and codes of ethics, as according to Noordegraaf (2007: 767) "codes of conduct prescribe rules of the game; codes of ethics prescribe appropriate behavior". In light of the foregoing, this study focuses on the value system governing the tourism operator's decision-making and behaviour, drawing on Hultsman's (1995) paper 'Just Tourism' which proposed an ethical framework for the industry. In this regard, "a tourism service ethic can be viewed as a foundational and articulated notion of what tourism professionals collectively accept and tacitly understand as being principled behavior" (Hultsman, 1995: 556). The need for a code of ethics in tourism has been emphasized by, amongst others, Payne and Dimanche (1996), who argued the need for ethical treatment of employees as well as customers, in addition to the need to recognize the environmental impact of tourism operations, and accommodate the inter-relatedness of tourism businesses within a community. More recently, Fox (2000) focused on the need for managerial ethical standards in the Croatian hotel industry, highlighting the criticality of these standards for the long-term development of this segment of the industry, and its relevance across the transitional countries. However, Bloland and Tempel (2004) highlighted some of the particular difficulties in measuring certain aspects of the traits associated with professionalism, for example, the existence of a professional association, or a code of ethics, where a profession either has one or not, but it doesn't allow for strength of the association, or level of compliance with the code of conduct. Bloland and Tempel (2004: 10) argued "codes of ethics can be badly or well written. They may be too general or too specific, too stringent or too lax." Indeed, in the context of the hospitality industry, Coughlan (2001: 157) called for further research into the relevance and effectiveness of existing professional codes and the need for change "where guidelines are vague or enforcement is lacking". It is not within the remit of this paper to embellish further on the role of professional bodies or this enforcement aspect, as the purpose of this paper is to outline the dimensions of professionalism, hence, the next section details the existence of specialist skills and expertise relevant to this discussion.

Specialist Skills and Expertise

In defining a skill, Knapp (1963: 4) argued that it is "the learned ability to bring about pre-determined results with maximum certainty, often with the minimum outlay of time, energy or both" while Hinchliffe (2002) added that skills are the foundations of the ability to complete job-tasks. In the context of this paper, the emphasis is placed on the fact that skill acquisition leads to predictable levels of task performance and accuracy (Green, 1998) and later, in the case of professionals, the development of expertise. Additionally, Gagné et al. (1992: 47) argued that "the acquisition of a motor skill can be reasonably inferred when the student can perform the act in a variety of contexts". Professionalism has, since the times of apprenticeship in the nineteenth century, been associated with specialised skills and, as mentioned previously, tourism education has traditionally been dominated by an emphasis on skill development.

In reviewing the literature, some authors differentiated between 'soft' and 'hard' skills, referring to those skills that involve an element of physical exertion or technical aspects of performing a job as 'hard' (Page et al., 1993), whereas, 'soft skills' are seen as "interpersonal, human, people, or behavioral skills, and place emphasis on personal behavior and managing relationships between people" (Rainsbury et al., 2002: 9). The literature highlights that hard skills are easier to learn (Caudron, 1999) and easier to measure than soft skills, however, there is a growing recognition that both skill types are complementary and necessary for individual successful performance in the workplace (Rainsbury et al., 2002; Hodges and Burchell, 2003). Consequently, both skill types are seen as necessary outcomes in the development of new professionals (Nilsson, 2007). Indeed, Zagonari's (2009: 7) analysis of education and training in tourism highlighted that not only are high quality standards associated with skill specialisation but also that "policies on tourism education and training should provide a balance between professional skills, basic knowledge, thematic specialisation: students should reach professional skills in order to meet the current qualitative need of firms".

However, to the best of the authors' knowledge, what these professional skills are in the tourism context has not been specifically addressed to date, and represents an area of further interest in the current ongoing study. Nevertheless, globally there is growing recognition of the need to constantly upgrade professional skills throughout an individual's working life, with the concept of lifelong learning gaining ground in this sector (Christou, 1999). Further, the professionalism literature frequently singles out such skills as interpersonal skills, communication skills and leadership skills in descriptions of professionals (Van de Camp et al., 2004), particularly as the relationship between the professional and their client is central to the topic; for the purposes of this paper these skills have been grouped under the one heading – specialist skills and expertise.

Professional Identity

Dubar (1991) developed the notion of professional identity as an implicit element of professionalism, defined in this instance as self-awareness based on reflective practice. In addition, Dahan (2007) referred to professional identity as a negotiated self-narrative, in recognition of the conflicts which arise when the professional's environment and practices do not match their self-image or predefined values and attributes. Specifically, Pratt et al. (2006: 236) suggested that professionals are "defined by what they do", but experience, reflection on experience, institutions and disciplines are also strong sources of identity (Henkel, 2005; Steinart et al., 2007). The socialisation process is critical in forming the tourism professional's identity, as "professional identity provides an indicative sense to collective belonging to that group" (Marhuenda et al. 2004: 223). Furthermore, identity development calls on the professional to develop their skills in critical thinking. In other words, to challenge the assumptions underlying the professional's thoughts and behaviours, and address changing the way they see the world, by reflecting on the information they receive and questioning its basis (Brookfield, 1987). Essentially, developing a professional identity requires the professional to become self-aware through 'higher order' thinking processes (see Garrison et al., 2001). Tertiary education has had a long association with the notion of developing critical thinking, and an ongoing debate continues on whether tertiary education is delivering graduates with the level of critical thinking skills required for their professional lives. In respect of the transitional countries, once again the criticality of higher education has been highlighted, but there may also be a role for the professional organisations as they develop, and play a role in instigating lifelong learning and continuous professional development.

CONCLUSION

This paper has conceptualised professionalism in a tourism context as a construct involving ten dimensions. In addition, the integration of these various aspects of professionalism, as highlighted in this paper into the tourism higher education curriculum represents the next major challenge for tertiary institutes. Similar to Sheldon's (1989) study on tourism professionalism, this paper indicates the importance of formal educational programmes to further enhance professionalism. Furthermore, the importance of socialisation processes, such as those created through networking, has been identified as a key element in the development of the collegiality implicit in professionalism. In respect of transitional countries, the paper has proposed a number of possible avenues in the development of professionalism (education, networking, professional associations, international exposure and the development of a tourism professional identity), thereby providing a starting point for discussion as to how professionalism may be enhanced in the transitional countries' respective tourism sectors.

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