Abstract: There have been efforts in recent literature and media commentary to propose that management become a profession. Some papers and texts have delved into the literature relevant to professions and processes of professionalization. To date there has been no thorough paper to encapsulate the key writings on professions and professionalization. The present paper presents a thorough literature analysis and in doing so develops a classification of a profession from the key attributes presented in the relevant literature. In considering the literature from various perspectives of philosophy, social science, ethics and discipline specific occupational arenas the paper establishes a set of propositions to classify a profession. From the resulting classification that identifies key attributes of a profession the authors proceed to evaluate a claim for management as a profession. After considering several challenges to the claim of management as a profession the authors present two potential initiatives that may assist in developing further progress to the professionalization of management. The conclusion considers the contribution of this paper and arenas of continuing research on professionalization of management.
Management as a Profession: Applying a classification and attending to ethical requirements

Running Head Short Title: Management as a Profession – Ethical requirements

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Introduction.

Over the past decade, a growing number of papers have appeared in mainstream business journals exhorting that it is time that management became a profession (Cabera 2009; Khurana 2010; Khurana, Nohria and Penrice 2005a; Khurana and Podolny 2007; Spender 2007; Thomas 2006). At the same time, other authors identified that management failed to meet and maintain many of the key elements prevalent in many of the mainstream professions – namely medicine and law regarding qualification, accreditation, and representative bodies (Ardaugh 2010; Barker, 2010a, 2010b; Heineman 2010; Sutton 2007). The background of this debate has been prompted largely by the fallout of the Global Financial Crisis (GFC). The GFC was propelled by managerial decisions in the finance, banking and business arena which supported lax corporate governance and systemic practices of moral hazard in developing and propagating misleading financial products and advice. Further the regularity of business scandals post GFC involving corporate managers clearly puts into question the capacity of the business managerial classes to develop and sustain the ethical and professional business practices expected by society at large (Podolny 2009). Recent scandals such as Libor in 2012 involving interest rate rigging between Barclays, Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS), Deutsche Bank and Societe Generale, and Eurobor in 2014 involving HSBC, along with JP Morgan and Credit Agricole, (Roberts and Griffin 2016) add further disappointment in behaviours of business managers. The most recent corporate scandal of note involved Wells Fargo Bank’s fraud development of 2 million unauthorized client product accounts to develop a stream of fees (Ochs 2016). In each, and every case so called ‘professional’ executives developed the unethical concept and decided on the actions towards securing financial returns based on fraud and malfeasance. This was done at individual executive levels, executive group levels and in the Wells Fargo Bank instance across a total organizational business unit culture.
Time and again within both for profit and not for profit organizations, scandals of poor work practices, deficits of customer care, or paucity of product safety, have shown managers at all levels from C-suite to operations as lacking real insight into the notion of professionalism or the concept of representing a profession. Karlson, Aguirre and Rivera (2017) argue that it is difficult to research and assess if there is more corporate wrongdoing today than in the past. However, the researchers point out that more senior managers today are losing their jobs due to unethical practices. They state that at the CEO level: ‘Globally, dismissals for ethical lapses rose from 3.9 per cent of all successions in 2007–11 to 5.3 per cent in 2012–16, a 36 percent increase (Karlson, Aguirre and Rivera 2017, p. 3). Against this harsh reality of poor practices there has persisted a tacit recognition of a need for greater demonstrable professionalism from managers. This call is evidenced in the business literature focusing on ethics, business literature in general, in literature surrounding management education, and on the topic of management as a profession (Ardaugh 2010; Cabrera 2009; Khurana 2010; Martin 2010; Podolny 2009).

In the realm of business ethics literature, the key focus of professional behaviour for business practitioners has largely focused on codes of ethics (Frankel 1989; Hoivik 2002; Peterson et al. 2001; Valentine and Fleischman 2008). The research on codes of ethics relates more to organizational codes of ethics or a code of practice rather than a code for a profession. In attending to the effectiveness of codes of practice in general for business Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) identified mixed results for codes of ethics. These ranged from largely counterproductive (Grundstein-Amado 2001) through to of little impact (Lere and Gaumnitz 2003) to beneficial (Wood and Rimmer 2003) and successful (Dobson 2005). In defining the nature of codes of ethics and a proposition as to the attributes of a code of ethics Kaptein and Schwartz (2008) identified the conditions under which a code had the most fruitful opportunities to be effective pointing out; ‘A code is not an instrument that stands in isolation
of others and it could even be said that in and of itself it is meaningless: the process of developing and implementing the code is pivotal.’ (p. 122). Similarly, Doig and Wilson (1998) in discussing codes of practice for private sector businesses conclude from their research of major cases of corporate performance in applying codes; ‘...the use of codes alone in defining conduct, culture and performance in the private sector may be less effective than their proponents think, and of less impact on managers and employees, customers and stakeholders than they would wish.’ (p. 148).

To this point however the continuing actions of managers in business organizations across industries, cultures and borders fails to give any encouragement that managers can exhibit attributes of a profession or make moves toward developing many of the key ethically based elements of a profession. This includes the concept of a code of ethics for managers and a code of practice outlining expected adherence to behaviours associated with a practice of the expertise upon which a profession is normally founded. What is lacking so far in the literature, particularly within the business ethics literature has been a contribution establishing a definitive classification of a profession against which not only management but also many other business occupations can be assessed. Further there has been little discussion in the prevailing debate on professions of the term professional, particularly, the co-opting of the term professional by any occupation and the implications stemming from this practice (Wilensky 1964). The professionalization of management has been on going since the commencement of business education at Harvard at the turn of the Twentieth century, but as argued by key writers in the field this process has stalled (Khurana 2007; Khurana et al. 2005a; Rousseau 2010). The continuing argument by some is that it is time for management to become a profession, whereas others highlight the hurdles that would prevent this occurring.
The structure of this paper then is to: Firstly, outline the key research questions and to demonstrate their import to practice of management and business ethics. Secondly, to consider the key literature and arguments presented across business, ethics, sociology and professional practices to develop a clear view of the debates and findings on the nature of a profession. Thirdly, in considering this detailed review of the prevailing classic and contemporary literature to develop and support a classification for a profession. Fourthly, having established a classification to then proceed to perform an assessment of management against the classification of a profession. Fifthly, discuss further aspects of management professionalization. Finally, develop a conclusion regarding the current contribution to research and where further research or action could be developed.

**Research Focus**

The research focus of this paper deals with theory of profession across disciplines as well as specific application of the concept of profession to management. In considering both the nature of a profession and the notion of management as a profession emphasis has been placed upon ethics underpinning several of the attributes of a profession. Ethics and moral practice of professionals has been a key theme in writings on defining professions and determining professionalism. As outlined in the introduction to this paper the ethics of management practice has been a critical issue for writers advocating both management as a profession and those writers advocating greater responsibility by business executives in their roles. The debate on management as a profession in the broad business literature argues for business managers to act with greater integrity and professional responsibility to the societies they serve (Cohen, Krishnamoorthy and Wright 2010; Hamel 2012; Kemper and Martin 2010; Marwa and Zair, 2008; Podolny 2009; Sahlman 2009; Thomas 2006; Zadek 2004). The literature moves on from calls for a profession to consider the challenges that could prevent this (Khurana et al. 2005b; Khurans and Nohria 2008; Khurana and Podolny 2007;
Martin 2010; Spender 2007; Barker 2010b). Finally, the literature in the field attends to the issue of the failure of business schools and MBA curricula as providers of a knowledge base serving responsible managerial practice (Barker 2010a, 2010b; Bennis and O’Toole 2005; Datar, Garvin and Cullen 2011; Ghoshal 2005; Krause 1996; Mintzberg 2004; Navarro 2008; Podolny 2009; Richards-Wilson 2002).

The need for this research lies largely in presenting a more integrated analysis of both past and present literature on the topic of management as a profession. Previous literature has selectively considered attributes, characteristics, requirements outlined as essential to a profession. Much of the focus has been on knowledge and skills in developing an expertise. Some papers have considered the issues of credentialism as well as codes of practice and codes of ethics. Little attention has been paid in many instances to the issues of licensing to practice, and to considerations of professionals’ adherence to restrict market power abuse and to apply expertise for the common good (an expectation of most true professions). In the present paper, the authors present a more holistic analysis and discussion of the nature of a profession as well as the role of ethics in a profession. This analysis is then applied to determine an effective assessment classification of a profession and to proceed to assess management as a profession.

**Research Methodology**

The research paradigm relevant to this research is qualitative (Creswell 2013; Denzin and Lincoln 2011). The methodology employed is a literature based which applies an inductive strategy (Lin 2009; Luce-Kapler 2012). Inductive reasoning moves from the specific to the general (Blaikie 2007). In the current instance the selected research methodology would apply an inductive approach to consider the differing views across differing disciplines interested in the concept of a profession. It would move from specific arguments and insights
inclusive of the usual industry based comparisons for medicine and law to determine potential element of a general nature to inform a classification of profession. The research method involved data collection of literature obtained from applied searches of key terms related to ‘profession’ across multiple data bases and key discipline journals in fields of social science, ethics, philosophy, business ethics, management inclusive of management history, law, medicine and accounting.

Siddaway (2015, p. 1) advises that where there are conflicting findings or views, a systematic review of the literature aims to address these problems by ‘identifying, critically evaluating and integrating the findings of all relevant, high-quality individual studies addressing one or more research questions.’ In discussing the nature of a narrative literature review Siddaway (2015) indicates that that a good systematic review achieves aims to identify to what extent existing research has developed towards clarifying a problem and may also discover relations, contradictions, incongruities and gaps in the literature (Baumeister and Leary 1997; Bem 1995). It can also critique, evaluate, extend, or develop theory or help to develop general statements or a central conceptualization. Finally, it may provide implications for practice and policy as well as suggested directions for further research (Cooper 2003; Sternberg 1991).

A narrative based literature methodology is employed in this research project. Under this methodology, the research aims to: Advance general statements or an overarching conceptualization in relation to a profession. Identify relations, contradictions, inconsistencies and gaps in the literature, and investigate reasons for these. Finally, provide implications for practice and policy in relation to management pursuing professional status and then suggested directions for further research.
Profession and Professional – elusive terms

Wilensky (1964) contends that the term professional is freely applied to describe a growing number of occupations that have increasing specialization, transference of skill, objective standards of work and may involve a license to practice. The difficulty in discriminating between occupations and professions has been recognized by Koehn (1994) and also Taylor and Runté (1995). These writers assert that the term professional has been applied broadly to anyone who exhibits a high level of style, skill or even guile. This underscores that the wide application of the term has had the effect of devaluing the original concept of a profession and the term professional. Savan (1989) defines professions in broad terms as “groups which apply special knowledge in the service of a client” (p. 179). Cogan (1953, p. 111) argues that some of the problems in defining a profession can be resolved if practitioners apply the following:

- Determine a general framework within a lexicological and historical context,
- Provide ideal incentives through persuasive definitions,
- Develop the behavioural and operational definitions that provide guidance within the exclusive conditions of an individual profession.

Professions versus Occupations – a starting point

One of the key issues in defining the term profession is to determine how it differs from an occupation. This is a starting point to then consider what characteristics, elements, qualities or requirements represent a general classification to determine a profession and might act to assess if an occupation has structurally and operationally altered to satisfy consideration of the term profession.

May (1989), Koehn (1994) and De George (1999) all observed the perplexity that exists regarding the terms of profession and a professional, and note how these are distinct from a
trade, skilled occupation, craft or career. That said, De George (1999) states there is no single unambiguous term that is used to refer to a member of a profession although the term professional is most commonly used. He defines professionals as those who perform full-time work, for pay demonstrating a substantial expertise, but also notes that others may do the same thing in pursuit of a hobby, without pay and as amateurs and not belong to a profession. He clearly states that many activities can be classified as professional activities but not all these constitute professions. Dellaportas et al. (2005) embrace a more general approach to defining a profession stating that it is a community of people circumscribed by the endeavors they undertake, apprised by a common theoretical knowledge attained via formal education. The contentions of both De George (1999) and Dellaportas et al. (2005) parallel the authors' argument that the term professional has become synonymous with occupation. This does not mean that an occupation is a profession.

Newton (2014) provides a straightforward description that a profession is an occupational group distinguished from others by possession of a constellation of properties essentially central to its operations. Pound (1944) defined a profession as a group that pursues a learned art as a shared calling in the spirit of public service, and should be considered no less a public service because it may also be a method of livelihood. Pound contends that a profession is differentiated by its reliance on learning. According to Pound; ‘Learning, the pursuit of a learned art, is one of the things which distinguishes a profession from a calling or vocation or occupation.’ (1944, p. 205).

May (2001) contends that the professional’s covenant opens out in three paths that help distinguish professionals from careerists: the professional professes something (a body of knowledge and experience); on behalf of someone (or some institution); and does so in the scrutiny of colleagues. Bullock and Trombley (1999) describe the process of
professionalization that provides a link between the concepts of occupations and professions. They state that when a trade or occupation transforms itself by embracing a formal qualification based upon education, apprenticeship and examination, coupled with the emergence of an organization then it can set standards and control entry. It therefore establishes a degree of monopoly power, provide a regulatory framework for members and discipline those who fail to uphold the standards. According to Bullock and Trombley (1999) when this occurs then the occupation has moved towards being a true profession.

These definitions seem to support De George’s assertion that there is no universal agreement as to what constitutes a profession, other than it differs from an occupation, trade or career (De George, 1999). It appears that the distinction is to be found in the description of what characterizes or typifies professions versus occupations, crafts, trades or careers. Further Middlehurst and Kennie, (1997) present a compelling point that the features constituting a profession can be fluid and contested with periods of social change bringing contentions into sharp relief. The authors point out the features are subject to ‘fluctuations and differences across time culture and discipline’ Middlehurst and Kennie, (1997, p. 51).

**Professions contrasted with Occupations**

Wilensky (1964) maintains that occupations can be placed on a continuum of professionalization, which resembles the concept of professionalization promoted by Bullock and Trombley (1999). At one boundary are those often referred as the true professions, such as medicine and law, being highly specialized and regulated, whilst at the other are occupations that are uncomplicated and easily mastered. These last occupation types are what May (1989), Koehn (1994) and De George (1999) might refer to as trades, careers or crafts. Wilensky (1964) argues that some occupations progress along the continuum towards professionalization whereas others remain fixed or can regress. What is unclear is whether an
occupation becomes a profession at a stage along the continuum, or whether it needs to satisfy several critical criteria to assume this classification (Becker, 1962). Denzin and Mettlin (1968) in considering the issue of pharmacy as a profession identify that pharmacists satisfy some elements of a true profession. They certainly acquire and maintain specific knowledge and qualifications from a tertiary institute and service client interests. The authors therefore recognize that this occupation is further along a professionalization continuum as advocated by Wilensky (1964) and Bullock and Trombley (1999). Denzin and Mettlin (1968) argue that a lack of an accrediting and licensing institutions together with refutation of the profit motive (as pharmacists are involved in sales of goods beyond their primary expert knowledge base), means that pharmacy fails some key elements of a profession. They contend that occupations that satisfy some but not all key elements of a true profession may be considered a quasi-profession.

Watkins (1999) advises that the professions can be distinguished from other groups in society due to the specific characteristics of their members. These characteristics include the possession of specialized skills, the attainment of expert knowledge usually based on mastery obtained through intellectual and practical training and the existence of a regulatory body that is empowered to maintain the profession including ensuring that members abide by established standards. Chadwick and Thompson (2000) note that traditionally a profession has been distinguished by a specific body of knowledge, the mastery of which, at least in part, validated conditions for admittance to the profession and by an ideal of service to the community derived from the potential of that knowledge to confer status, power and income. Curnow and McGonigle (2006, p. 287) express this approach as the ‘attribute model of professions’ that attempts to identify the attributes that differentiate a profession from an occupation.
Reader (1966) argues that an occupation’s move to professional standing can be linked to the existence and influence of a relevant professional organization. Similarly, Sager (1995) notes that professions are characterised by a substantial skill base and theoretical knowledge that is acquired after lengthy education that includes testing for competency. As a result, a great deal of autonomy is afforded to these professions.

Koehn (1994), De George (1999) and Boatright (2012) summarize the basic characteristic of a member of a profession as a trustworthy agent of clients either because they are experts or they are service providers who will fulfil a client’s instructions for a fee. May (1989) states that Abraham Flexner’s presentation at the 1915 National Conference of Charities and Correction in Baltimore, attempted to purposefully define the essence of a profession. Since its publication this work has become a key influence for identifying and legitimizing other groups of workers as professionals. According to Flexner (1915) to qualify as a profession several criteria needed to be substantially satisfied:

- Professions involve essentially intellectual operations with large individual responsibility
- Professions derive their raw material from science and learning
- This material they work up to a practical and definite end
- Professions possess an educationally communicable technique
- Professions tend to self-organization
- Professions through their members are becoming increasingly altruistic in motivation.

Greenwood (1957) considering the literature on professions to that time observed that all professions seem to possess: (1) systematic theory, (2) authority, (3) community sanction, (4) ethical codes, and (5) a culture. Moore argues that defining a profession is methodologically achievable if ‘adequate operational specifications are available for reliable identification of
the selected characteristics’ (1970, p. 4). Moore argues that the notion of determining a profession by way of assessing professionalism of an occupation should be a scale rather than a cluster of attributes. He argues that definitions of attributes for professions can only be approximate and not absolute, that the dichotomy of true professions from non-professions would be too rigid excluding interesting variations in profession. Refuting an absolutist position, Moore argues that an occupation achieves professionalization over time through a process through both internal and external change (Moore, 1970).

In terms of attributes Moore (1970) indicates that the scale for professionalism needs to demonstrate that the professional practices the specific occupation full time as the key source of income. He further indicates that the professional is responding to a calling with normative and behavioural expectations and are identified with their peers through belonging to a formal organization designed to protect and enhance the interests of the profession. Further Moore (1970) identifies that a profession must possess useful knowledge and skills obtained through specialized education which is extensive and academically demanding. The professional is expected to exhibit a service orientation to provide for the needs of clients. Finally, Moore (1970) argues that in obtaining a unique level of valuable knowledge for client needs, the professional achieves a level of autonomy which is tempered by responsibility.

It should be noted that many individuals in occupations or for that matter industry based occupations claim that their members act professionally. The notion of acting professionally as in ‘skillfully’ or ‘expertly’ is not disputed as the term has been adopted into common usage to indicate quality workmanship or service (Neal and Morgan 2000).
In being distinctly different from an occupation, professions are afforded greater autonomy to self-determine the qualities, attributes, knowledge, practice, behaviours, attitudes, duties and obligations for the profession which result in significant status and financial remuneration. The author’s note that whilst not all the literature necessarily agrees with this relationship, the critical factor of expert knowledge being difficult to acquire together with a license to operate does restrict the supply of services, which results in capacity to claim higher remuneration. This exclusivity also results in members of the profession being in a minority when compared to occupations, which then can result in greater status.

**Establishing a classification of a profession**

The previous section identified the key arguments within business, ethics, sociology and professional practices literature to establish a clear view of present debates and findings on the nature of a profession. Attention now moves to establish of a classification of a profession drawn and supported from the prevailing classic and contemporary literature.

The first proposition to consider in developing a classification of a profession is to address the issue of nature of the attributes constituting a profession. As an a priori position to identifying these attributes it first needs to be established whether they are independent of each other or an integrated set. Within the review of literature above several potential attributes have been identified by scholars over the years. In the key literature on professions there appears a strong indication of integration rather than independence of attributes (Chadwick and Thompson 2000; May 1989; Watkins 1999). There also appears in several writings a clear indication for a set of attributes to be satisfied to achieve the status of a profession. Most notable are Flexner (1915) and May (1989) supporting an integrated model, and Khurana and Nohria (2008) indicating a set of integrated criteria of a profession. Given these considerations the following is the
first proposition of six reflecting the integrated attributes of a classification of a profession:

**Proposition 1:** A profession is distinctly different to an occupation requiring specific attributes of qualifications, accreditation, standards of expected behaviours and practice to be satisfied in order, to secure the right to be recognized as a profession. These attributes are mutually reinforcing in nature creating a recognizable and qualifiable standard for a profession.

**The intellectual component: Knowledge and Power**

A key aspect of professionalism is the power derived from expert knowledge and skill and the absence of such knowledge and skill on the part of the client. Middlehurst and Kennie (1997) contend that professionalism is a constructed phenomenon that is sustained because professionals can attend to the needs of clients confronting complex problems. They add, that a client in attempting to alleviate their problem, is unable to bridge sufficient specialist knowledge by themselves (Gold, Rodgers and Smith 2002). They assert the client relies on the professional’s specialized knowledge and skills as a remedy to their needs that is reliable. Abbott (1988) advises it is the abstract nature of the knowledge that differentiates the professional from other individuals and groups because of their capacity to direct this abstraction towards solving client problems. Eraut (1994, 2000) agrees, arguing that the client is dependent on the professional because they are unable to solve their problem by procedural knowledge alone or by consulting a manual. Essentially the relationship between professional and client is one of information asymmetry a point noted by Barker (2010a) and by Martin (2010). That is, for an individual to be a professional, it is necessary to have knowledge that only select, highly trained individuals know and can exercise.
Freidson (1970) classes professional knowledge as ‘pure’ knowledge. As such ‘pure’
knowledge is largely theory typically restricted to codified science and applied knowledge
that directs the professional’s practice of the knowledge to the problems faced by society or
the client. Professions require two expert knowledge bases. The first knowledge base relates
to specific theory and the second proficiency in application of that theory into practical
results. Mangham and Pye (1991) as well as Cheetham and Chivers (2000) expand further on
the subject of knowledge required for professions. These writers discuss knowledge in
relation to both ‘scientific knowledge’ which includes logic, analysis and the capacity for
rational deduction, and ‘behavioural knowledge’ which involves tacit and intuitive
understanding necessary for engagement with clients. Oakeshott (1962) presents a similar
view in making the connection that professions rely on the Aristotelian concept of ‘technical
knowledge’ and ‘practical knowledge’. This aligns with May (1989) who argues that
professional knowledge consists of conceptual knowledge allied with expertise and behaviour
principles that apply within a workplace. Significant knowledge of a complex nature, both
conceptual and behavioural, is formally acquired over time. The literature supports that it is
the possession of knowledge and mastery of this knowledge, which cannot be easily secured
that is a key, but not the only determination of trust between a member of a profession and
potential clients. The considerations above result in the following proposition as a key
attribute of a classification of a profession:

**Proposition 2:** A profession requires a specific and substantive intellectual
component of expert knowledge to underpin expertise in practice with that
knowledge applied to the benefit of the client.
Knowledge acquired formally

Cogan (1953, p. 33) defines a profession as ‘a vocation whose practice is founded upon an understanding of the theoretical structure of some department of learning or science, and upon the abilities accompanying such understanding’. Both Wall (1988) and Winch (2004) stress that the formal knowledge for a profession is extensive compared to occupations or crafts. It requires both substantial time and commitment to attain mastery.

May (1989) argues that the often complex and esoteric body of knowledge on which the professional relies expands beyond fundamental training to education and development. He suggests this is the reason Flexner (1915) holds that the profession’s education should be based in a university setting in order to differentiate it from apprenticeship systems and the crafts. Lusch and O’Brien (1997) agree that a profession is an occupation that requires extensive formal education that is supported by a formal qualification. May (1989) goes further arguing that a purpose of the professional is to contribute to the body of knowledge, through further research to improve professional knowledge and skills for the benefit of the profession and its clients. Although all professionals need not be researchers, the profession must establish the basis for progress in the field.

As Gorman and Sandefur (2011) note, all professions draw upon a body of knowledge comprised of formal theoretical standards. Abbott (1988) and Goode (1969) argue along the same lines referring to professions requiring expert knowledge. According to Abbott (1988, p. 8) professions are exclusive occupational groups applying, somewhat, ‘abstract knowledge’ to specific field of client cases and the ‘jurisdiction’ that is the authority and dominion over the field is the link between a profession and its work.
The authors maintain that qualifications acquired formally, usually through a university or similar qualified and quality institution, signal a grounded level of competence in knowledge, skills and attitudes supporting practice of the profession towards a market expectation of performance. Qualifications need to be established at universally accepted standards to commit to serve and meet the interests of a client. These qualifications should be based on expert knowledge and capability that includes a limit to practice, that is, not exceeding or providing advice outside the individual’s knowledge and capability. For many professions, they are ascribed as national or international standards of practice. Knowledge acquired formally is identified as a key attribute of a classification of a profession:

**Proposition 3:** The knowledge underpinning the profession and its practice must be acquired through formal qualifications to maintain universally accepted standards of practitioner competence in base knowledge, skill sets and professional behaviours and attitudes to serve clients and related stakeholders.

**Behavioural codes, license to operate and or accreditation**

Khurana, Nohria and Penrice (2005a) state that codes are a requirement for any occupation that aspires to be a profession. They distinguish between voluntary codes that exist in many occupational groups such as librarians, plumbers and those of the true professions where the approach is significantly more sophisticated and regulated. They argue that true professions teach the meaning and importance of the code as part of the formal education of members. Furthermore, they examine members’ comprehension and acceptance of such codes as a formal process upon which accreditation or licensing is dependent. Dellaportas et al. (2005) believe the process of licensing or accreditation has two objectives. Firstly, it ensures all members have the requisite knowledge and skill required to call themselves a member of the profession and secondly, it develops a sense of occupational identity that is committed to
professionalism. Once the professional has been granted the license to practice they must adhere to the code to maintain the right to practice.

Sager (1995) recognises the existence of a licence to operate and a professional association that establishes a code of ethics or rules of conduct by which members must abide. Frankel (1989) provides several arguments as to the positive impact of a code for members of a profession. He notes that there are different types of codes with different functions. Segon (2010) proposes they may be primarily aspirational, educational or regulatory in nature although most professional codes seek to achieve all three functions to some degree. In effect, the most important function is to guide or assists the professional to make more informed and wise decisions (Frankel 1989; Segon 2010). Within this framework, the code establishes standards towards the collective good even though it may be a mere distillation of collective experience and reflection.

An accreditation or licensing system permits individuals to practice, once they have proven mastery of substantive knowledge. The existence of formal accreditation that approves the knowledge base is fundamental to a profession. The authors maintain that this is one of the attributes that support or ratify the professional’s knowledge or expertise in the eyes of the client. This in turn provides more evidence or a sense of comfort for a client regarding the legitimacy of the professional and their ability to use their knowledge and skills to solve the problems of the client. Requirement for behavioural codes and a license to operate and or accreditation establish a further attribute for a classification of a profession:

**Proposition 4:** A profession must be supported by criteria of eligibility to practice inclusive of entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements which include a potential license to practice and stipulated professional code of
practice. This provides restriction of eligibility to a profession and maintenance of standards.

A professional association

The existence of an association or professional body is a key feature that distinguishes the profession from other occupations (May 1989; Morgan 1998; Khurana, Nohria and Penrice 2005a; Pearce, Miani, Segon and Nguyen, 2015). These authors suggest that the association has numerous functions including restricting membership to the association only to those that satisfy the high standards of practice thus maintaining its status and establishing and maintaining a set of rules or standards to which members must adhere. These authors also note that professional bodies act to develop the expert knowledge underpinning the profession and to regulate the behaviour of members including the expulsion of those members who fail to meet the standards or demonstrate required levels of mastery.

Similarly, De George (1999) and Ardaugh (2010) describe the role of a professional association as managing the field or discipline as well as establishing restriction of entry to the field of practice. Flexner (1915) also notes the criteria of admission, legitimate practice and proper conduct as key characteristics of a profession. Beauchamp and Bowie (1997) agree that standards of professional practice include obligations and principles of moral conduct determined by the professional community.

Continuing eligibility to membership of a profession relies not only on maintaining competency in expert knowledge and practice and being ‘financial’ regarding any membership fees, it also requires maintaining the standards and behaviours expected of the
profession (Frankel, 1989). A breach of any code of practice to which members of a profession have attested can lead to censure or, under a serious breach, loss of membership (Frankel 1989).

A professional association is comprised of members of that profession. The association purpose is as a regulatory body to act for the interests of all members of the profession. The existence of an association is a key feature of a true profession. However, the authors note that the association must perform specific roles. Firstly, it establishes the accreditation system or recognizes some form of examination that verifies the mastery of relevant knowledge and permits the individual to practice. Secondly, the association establishes a relevant code of ethics or practice that commits the member to a set of ethical standards, which the association enforces, including the removal of the right to practice. Thirdly, the association is charged with a responsibility for continuing education and development of not only the individual but also the sum of knowledge that represents the profession. The need to establish a professional body or association, to coordinate membership, to license to practice and to regulate members in respect of standards of practice and of behaviour is a further attribute of a profession.

**Proposition 5:** A profession must be supported by a professional association or regulatory body the purpose of which is to ensure that members must fulfil and maintain entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements and stipulated professional codes of practice. This provides scrutiny of member practice, development of standards and review of eligibility to the profession.
A moral disposition and rejection of the profit motive

De George (1999) describes a set of characteristics that typify a profession including high levels of autonomy and self-governance. He states that, in return, professions are properly expected, to serve the public good, to set higher standards of conduct for their members than those required of others in society and to enforce a higher discipline on themselves than others do. He notes that another way professionals differ is they are expected to follow a higher set of standards in personal as well as professional conduct, thus setting an example of proper conduct and to be above suspicion. The professional is expected not only to refrain from improper conduct but be seen to refrain and be known to refrain from it.

May (2001) states that Flexner’s original characteristics of professionals can be synthesized to three categories: intellectual, organizational and moral. Boatright (2012) states that obligations of roles are sometimes added to those of ordinary morality and this is especially applicable to the situation of professionals. He offers two justifications for role morality. The first is a simple argument that some roles have responsibilities to many different stakeholders and hence must consider a wide range of interests. The second is that roles are created to better serve the interests of society and therefore have accompanying obligations that enable a society to achieve more, thereby benefiting a greater number.

Raelin (1991) and Lennertz (1991) identify an intellectual tradition and a fiduciary relationship to society as prime characteristics of a profession. The concept of a social duty is also supported Camenisch (1983) and Frankel (1989) who describe a profession as a ‘moral community’ because to be self-regulatory the members of the profession must establish mutual goals and outline appropriate methods to achieve them.
Khurana, Nohria and Penrice (2005a) argue that for an occupation to be considered a profession it must satisfy several criteria including a commitment to use specialized or expert knowledge for the public good. This could be interpreted as an altruistic characteristic of professionals. They also note that professionals must renounce the goal of profit-maximization, in exchange for professional autonomy and monopoly power. They suggest that because professionals have specialized knowledge in areas of great importance to society, it is expected that true professionals make that knowledge available to all who require it. It is further expected that they do so in a way that maintains professional standards and values ahead of the securing individual advantage. In this manner, the professional’s knowledge is regarded as a public good even when they are serving the needs of clients (Khurana et al. 2005a).

Similarly, Bowie (1990) provides further guidance on the use of expert knowledge stating that the chief function of a professional is not to apply their specialist knowledge to maximize income, rather professionals should apply their knowledge to protect ignorant clients from being exploited by others. Thomas (2006) in reviewing the contributions of Peter Drucker to the field of management and its professional standing, identified a need for managers and management educators to consider their social and cultural role as ‘citizen professionals’.

Jennings, Callahan and Wolf (1987) suggest that although the terms common good and public interest are often used synonymously, the former has an implication of the communal whereas the later tends to have an individualistic orientation. They identify service that contributes to the public good as including perspectives on human values, facets of the human good and the good life, which they term civic discourse. By contrast, they note that the public interest has most recently embraced social philosophies of liberalism, utilitarianism and democratic pluralism so that the concept within society emerges from a
rational alliance of self-interested parties. The public interest is the aggregation of the private interest of these individuals and it is maximized when the collective realization of individual interests is pursued within social arrangements, institutions and values that make social life possible, orderly and mutually advantageous. Essentially, this perspective suggests that professionals serve the public interest simply by making their knowledge, skills and capabilities available to the public.

The notion that professions have a duty to the public interest is not universal, however. Brilloff (1972) argues that as a professional is engaged in a contractual arrangement with a client, they must attend to the client’s needs and not be concerned with any non-related. Similarly, Collins and Schultz (1995) highlight the economic contract between the professional who sells services to the client and that their allegiance should only be to the client.

De George (1999) questions the issue of moral standards for professions suggesting that they no longer set higher moral standards for the profession but set professional or ‘ethical’ standards. He claims that some codes are simply created to satisfy one of the accepted attributes of a profession, and others are only used for ceremonial or induction purposes. Similarly, Jennings, Callahan and Wolf (1987) acknowledge that although traditionally the ideal of providing service in the interests of the public good has been a theme in many codes of professional ethics, it has largely been rhetorical in nature. They further state that the reality is that public duty remains low on the list of ethical priorities for most professions, and remains uncertain and ill defined.

Based upon the critical analysis above, the authors recognize that a commitment to serve the interest of society by supporting the common good is an attribute that is not compulsory for
an occupation to be considered a profession. The authors accept the argument presented by some authors that the act of provision of expertise can be considered as serving the interests of society. However, this is a minimalist approach to the concept of the common good. The recent exploration of management as a profession in the literature was initiated by corporate financial and consumer fraud scandals (Barker 2010a; Khurana 2007; Khurana et al. 2005b; Martin 2010) where managers exploited substantive knowledge and power relations for personal or self-interest. The authors therefore argue that professions need to have an explicit commitment to serve the public good and avoid abuse of the inherent power accrued by the nature and attributes of the profession.

**Proposition 6:** A profession must have an explicit commitment from its membership to serve the interest of society by contributing to the common good and not exploiting the opportunities inherent in the power of professional expertise for personal or self-interest.

**A classification of a profession**

The authors argue that these six propositions form the basis of a classification to assess the requirements of a profession. Drawing on the key debates on the nature of a profession within the literature the following key attributes of a profession are identified. A profession:

- Requires that the intellectual command of the knowledge and skills of the profession are practiced in manner requiring rigor and a member of a profession displays a primary accountability for decisions and actions.
- Must possess and draw upon a store of knowledge that is based on sound theory to practice principles and constantly improved through learning.
• Applies its theoretical and complex knowledge to the practical solution of human and social problems with a further aim to pass on such knowledge as well as improved stocks of knowledge to novice generations in a deliberate manner.

• Develops organizational processes which establish criteria for member registration, auspice of legitimate practice, guide proper conduct and deregister members for professional breaches if required.

• Must be imbued with an altruistic spirit serving the community and common good.

Based on the above considerations, the authors present a conceptual model for a profession (see below) comprising six interdependent and mutually supporting attributes based propositions presented by the authors. The first differentiates a profession from an occupation and the remaining are the critical attributes that act to define a profession. All attributes need to be fulfilled to claim the identity of a profession. The conceptual model indicates the natural interdependencies between the attributes detailed in the propositions that have informing and reinforcing aspects between the attributes. An important aspect of this model is the indication of a focus for each of the attribitional propositions. The first focus is ‘integrative’ encompassing the proposition that the core attributes classifying a profession are mutually dependent and all attributes must be satisfied. The second focus is ‘knowledge’ and relates to two attribute based propositions relating to professions securing expert knowledge and that knowledge must be acquired through formal qualifications. Finally there is a third focus related to ethics covering three attributes. Namely; a profession requires criteria of eligibility to practice a potential license to practice and a professional code of practice, a profession is supported by a professional association to ensure that members fulfil entry qualifications, maintain accreditation requirements and abide by professional codes of practice, a profession must
have an explicit commitment to serve the interest of society by contributing to the
common good.

Figure 1 Conceptual model of a classification of a profession.

    Goes here.
Ethical attributes as underpinnings to practice of professions

Considering the literature applied in determining the above classification of a profession it is notable that three of the six propositions presented directly touch on ethical aspects of practice. Proposition four in the classification indicates a profession must be supported by criteria of eligibility to practice inclusive of entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements which include a potential license to practice and stipulated professional code of practice. In this manner, the knowledge of know what and know how are maintained but importantly the attitudes and behaviours underpinning expert practice that is competently applied. Frankel (1989) argues that a profession is an institution performs as a normative reference group for its members. It is through a code of ethics that the profession, clarifies for both its membership and society the values it commits to in guiding behaviours. Austin (1961) developed an important contribution to the debate on business management as a profession observing that if it was to aspire to become one it needed to secure a sound code of conduct. Austin (1961) articulated a sound code could be recognized by three characteristics common to all the pure professions. These are: Firstly, the requirement that a member of the profession demonstrate a standard of excellence within a recognized body of knowledge, with a focus on expanding that knowledge for the benefit of the profession. Secondly, a code of conduct, developed by the membership of the which each member affirms to follow. Austin (1961) stresses that the code should be framed in affirmation rather than ‘Thou Shalt Nots’. Thirdly, members must place society’s interest before self-interest.

Proposition six also considers ethical aspects of practice in a profession indicating an explicit commitment from membership of the profession to contribute to the common good and not exploit the potential power of expertise. This proposition is a recognition that with the potential for obtaining a monopoly provision position within the market due to a closed membership of a profession, that there are expected reciprocities to the market through
responsibilities to clients and society in general. These responsibilities include provision of
expertise without exploitation of clients and society in general. This should also include some
consideration of altruistic behaviours as professionals such as medical practitioners and legal
practitioners in relation to pro bono work.

Proposition five further indicates that a profession is supported by a professional regulatory
body to ensure that members fulfil and maintain; entry qualifications, continuing
accreditation requirements and stipulated professional codes of practice. In establishing a
professional body to oversee licensing and mandatory standards of practice the profession is
ensuring a consistency expertise is delivered and ethical behaviours and interactions are
maintained. The aim is to define and sustain the integrity of the profession in its ethics,
practice and on going reputation.

The prevailing literature on management as a profession

There have been several arguments presented in the business literature supporting
management as a profession whilst others have refuted that management can achieve the
status of a profession. An early assessment presented by Schein (1988) found that on
several bases management was a profession but on several other bases was not yet a
profession. Schein (1988) made the point that though business schools were still aiming
towards professionalizing managers and inculcating professional values for a
management profession these were constantly undermined by organizational values that
may or may not be conducive to the professional ideal. The series of corporate and
industry related scandals mentioned earlier in this paper represent clear evidence that
Schein’s (1988) theory from nearly three decades ago still has sharp if not sharper teeth.
In discussing the bases for management as a profession Schein (1988) points out a body
of knowledge, he does admit a potential weakness that management is a generalized
body of knowledge rather than a specific expert body, managers do not have a single client relationship and they have a conflict in serving customer needs, shareholder needs and the agency needs of organizational superiors. Managers in organizations may use asymmetric information for organizational advantage and thereby achieve self-interest in performance. This does not align to the usual attributes of a profession serve the interest of society by contributing to the common good and not exploiting the opportunities inherent in the power of professional expertise for personal or self-interest. On several ethically founded bases Schein (1988) would see organizational cultures as a possible source of erosion of management professional attributes.

An earlier analysis on the topic of management as a profession by Bowen (1955) identified that in traditional professions there is a primary relationship to an identifiable group of customers served by the practitioners. There is a significant relationship between professional and client which requires professionally skilled practice, maintaining ethical standards in dealings maintaining a duty of care. In terms of the business manager, Bowen argues:

‘Because the clientele of business is so diffuse and ramified and distant, and because business relationships are so impersonal, it is much more difficult for businessmen, as compared with members of the traditional professions, to perceive their responsibilities and to respond to them.’ (1955, p. 114.).

Bowen (1955) indicates that management does not have the focus of a profession, namely serving clients needs ethically and with skilled practice and therefore fails a key profession attributes. The corporate scandals ongoing since the GFC make Bowen’s first insight regarding management failing to be a profession on the grounds of detachment from any discernable client interest that more disturbing as the practice within management seems to be an enduring facet.
Spender (2007) in an essay examining management education particularly that provided by business schools has taken up the position espoused by May (2001) and Pound (1944, p. 204) as a ‘learned profession’. Spender identifies that ‘management education has professionalized around quasi-scientific research methods and a regulated body of knowledge’ (2007, p. 39). Spender (2007) further argues that management as a profession should be considered as pertaining to both science and art with an emphasis to be placed on art to achieve the status of a profession. Spender’s (2007) final position on management as a profession is best described as a series of broad aspirations imbued with the community of practice model of Wenger (1998).

‘Perhaps, at bottom, a profession is a group sufficiently disciplined, communicative, and reflexive to know itself as a community of considered practice. To reach this degree of self-perception and understanding requires serious hard work, serious commitment to the profession, serious pushing at the limits to professional practice, and serious consideration of its impact on others. Come to think of it, that sounds like a pretty good description of management as a profession.’ (Spender 2007, p. 40).

This broad view is commendable but still leaves the management community lacking clarity on specific requirements, obligations, processes and expected behaviours to underpin a profession and professional practice. The authors consider that a more robust approach to determining the parameters for a profession are required and that a resulting classification should be applied to the role of manager.

Khurana and Nohria (2008) present the argument that it is time to make management a profession, recognizing that for the moment management has lost legitimacy due to corporate ethical failures. Their arguments to establish management as a profession are principally
based upon establishing a code of ethics for management and movements to formalize management education. The authors also propose a Hippocratic oath for managers as a code of conduct. In this oath, aspects of profession are touched on in a broad manner with numerous specific pledges, recognitions, vows and promises. The key aspects relevant to a profession within the proposed oath which add to the authors’ arguments are; to avoid unbridled self-interest, avoid conflict of interest, and maintain standards of behaviour in line with the expectations of the profession. Nowhere do the authors refine discussion on the nature of a body of knowledge. It presents a presumption of the MBA as the body of knowledge and business schools as the developers and dispensers of this knowledge. The authors neither deal with the variety of possibilities of MBAs nor that this degree is generalist in nature not specialized knowledge as in medicine or law both of which have a core curriculum. Also, not recognized in discussion is the large number of managerial positions and managers per se for whom an MBA is not suited to their talents or to the job they do. Though Khurana and Nohria (2008) discuss the establishment of a Certified Business Professional (CBP), no discussion is presented of a requisite body to evaluate membership, coordinate and monitor professional practice, and grant or rescind license of a profession as in law or medicine. They do discuss the issue of licensing addressing both pros and cons of both a closed system and a more open system of some licensed professionals and others unlicensed. One of the criticisms of the arguments of Khurana and Nohria is that they predominantly focus on one aspect of professionalism, ‘the adherence to "higher aims" beyond self-interest or economic benefit’ (Pfeffer 2011, p.38). Pfeffer (2011) argues that professions have a further defining feature: a specialized body of knowledge that practitioners are obliged to apply in their practice.
Khurana, Nohria and Penrice (2005a) argue the case that management should move to become a profession. Their analysis identifies four ‘traits and practices’ for determining a profession (Khurana et al. 2005a, p. 1):

- A common body of knowledge resting on a well-developed, widely accepted theoretical base;
- A system for certifying that individuals possess such knowledge before being licensed or otherwise allowed to practice;
- A commitment to use specialized knowledge for the public good, and a renunciation of the goal of profit-maximization, in return for professional autonomy and monopoly power; and
- A code of ethics, with provisions for monitoring individual compliance with the code and a system of sanctions for enforcing it.

Many occupations use the term professional to describe their status however this is not synonymous with an occupation legitimately fulfilling the expectations of a profession. In considering the discipline of management against the attributes of a profession, the authors conclude that management cannot legitimately lay claim to being a profession. The claim is based upon an assessment presented below of management against the classification for a profession.

**Assessment of management against a classification of a profession**

Assessment of management as a profession assessed against the attributes of a classification for a profession as outlined in figure 1 above.

Proposition 1: A profession is distinctly different to an occupation requiring specific attributes of qualifications, accreditation, standards of expected behaviours and practice to be
satisfied to secure the right to be recognized as a profession. These attributes are mutually reinforcing in nature creating a recognizable and qualifiable standard for a profession.

Regarding proposition 1, there is no qualification requirement for being a manager. Nor is there an accreditation or regulatory requirement necessary to practice as a manager. There is no generally accepted minimum standard of expected behaviour compared, for example, to medicine’s ‘do no harm’ or law’s key practitioner requirement of - duty to the court and the administration of justice. Those representing the practice of management have not developed an integrated, intelligible universally applicable series of criteria of eligibility and standards of practice to develop it beyond a classification of occupation.

Proposition 2: A profession requires a specific and substantive intellectual component of expert knowledge to underpin expertise in practice with that knowledge applied to the benefit of the client. In relation to proposition 2, there is a wide range of management qualifications from certificates through to master level programs. This fails to fulfil the expectation of the possession of expert knowledge which cannot be easily attained, and mastery of this knowledge underpinning practice. Expert knowledge for management practice is not guaranteed. A plethora of management training and academic programs undermines any establishment of an expert body of knowledge and skills for management as a profession.

Proposition 3: The knowledge underpinning the profession and its practice must be acquired through formal qualifications to maintain universally accepted standards of practitioner competence in base knowledge, skill sets and professional behaviours and attitudes to serve clients and related stakeholders. In respect to proposition 3 as presented above, management knowledge is often acquired through on-the-job experience. There are no formal qualifications that serve as entry to management
practice. There are no universally accepted standards of practitioner competence for a management role. Management fails to meet the attribute outlined in the proposition.

Proposition 4: A profession must be supported by criteria of eligibility to practice inclusive of entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements which include a potential license to practice and stipulated professional code of practice.

Regarding proposition 4, the attribute outlines a restriction of eligibility to a profession and maintenance of standards. Management has no defined criteria of eligibility or requirement of a license to practice. As such any individual can make claim to be a manager. There is also no remedy to effectively act on negligent practice or misconduct by managers. They can continue to practice whether competent or not.

Proposition 5: A profession must be supported by a professional association or regulatory body the purpose of which is to ensure that members must fulfil and maintain entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements and stipulated professional codes of practice. Referring to proposition 5 above, the attribute of a regulatory body provides scrutiny of member practice, development of standards and review of eligibility to the profession. Management has no overarching regulatory body, no continuing accreditation requirements and no professional code of practice. As such managers have neither, guidelines to frame practice and behaviour nor a process to ensure competence and relevance of their practice.

Proposition 6: A profession must have an explicit commitment from its membership to serve the interest of society by contributing to the common good and not exploiting the opportunities inherent in the power of professional expertise for personal or self-interest.
In respect to proposition 6 above, management does not require membership of a professional association where an explicit commitment to serve the interest of society is made. The evidence of manager practice in abiding by a common good process is damning. Barker (2010), Khurana et al. (2005a) and Martin (2010) all indicate recent corporate scandals and the failure of the managerial cadres of corporations to maintain ethical standards and meet society’s expectations for corporate behaviour. The requirement for a substantive assurance to commitment to serve the interest of society by contribution to the common good and avoiding opportunities inherent in the power of professional expertise for personal or self-interest, is long overdue.

**Developing professionalization of Management**

There has been a concerted call in the literature for managers to possess an increased level of competence and standard of ethical practice. The classification of a profession presented in this paper in establishing standards, practices, processes, expectations and potential repercussion for professional breach could certainly address concerns raised in recent years over the decline in managerial standards of ethical behaviour. The issue that remains is the challenge of implementing such a professionalization agenda and most importantly securing agreement as well as commitment from the disparate and large number of stakeholders involved under the banner of a discipline of management.

In considering some of the potential steps towards professionalization of management One option is for providers of management education to adopt a consistent standard for the entry level qualification. The United Nations ‘Principles for Responsible Management Education’ (PRME) provides a starting point for this approach. Despite being promulgated nearly a decade ago, most business schools have not yet applied for this accreditation. A
recent review of the PRME website by the authors identified the following in relation to education institution signatories in developed economies:

- Strong representation of the major university and business schools for Australia, Canada, Denmark, France, Norway, Spain, Sweden.
- Very good representation for Germany and the Netherlands.
- Good representation for the United Kingdom and the United States. Notable for these two countries was the absence of the heavy hitter business schools usually listed in the top 20 Financial Times top business school listings.

As membership to the PRME is a completely voluntary process, it may never achieve universal penetration. Further, it does not address the issue of the requirement of a standard qualification for entry to practice in the management discipline nor that of a code of practice. It does however offer a starting point to introduce a set of aims and identifiable outcomes regarding managerial practice. Though not dictating the requisite knowledge and skills to achieve these it does provide curriculum focus and learning outcome influence. An action such as this may go some way to fulfilling Propositions 2, 3 and 6 as the PRME promotes environmental sustainability, global social responsibility and responsible leadership in its six-principle charter.

Another option would be to use an approach not unlike the Certified Practicing Accounting qualification (CPA), which provides global professional recognition on top of a base qualification of practice. Industry has created both the impetus and the market for CPA status. Consideration should be given to testing whether industry would be willing to differentiate professional management in the same way, as this appears to be the only current working solution that could translate. The establishment of a Certified Professional Management (CPM) accreditation would enable significant differentiation of expertise as exists in the accounting field together with a representative and licensing body to address the
issues of Propositions 5 and 6. Proposition 1 which affirms an integration of the attributes would only succeed if both the above initiatives or similar were simultaneously achieved.

**Conclusion**

The authors advance that the classification proposed in this paper provides a comprehensive description and robust tool for assessing a profession. An analysis of the occupation of management against the classification of a profession finds management lacking across all six attributes. The authors conclude that management cannot be classified as a profession. The paper contributes to the knowledge of a profession in relation to an integrated analysis of the classical and critical contemporary literature on professions with an emphasis on both the nature of occupations reserving a right to the distinctiveness of a profession and the ethics implications of securing that distinction. The classification represents a contribution to knowledge and learning to the academic areas of work, occupation and the role of an ethical expectations in those fields. The key contribution relates to the attributes of a profession and how it differs from an occupation. Moreover, the attributes of profession which determine a profession rely heavily on ethical commitments. Those that specifically relate to an ethical integrity of practice relate to; codes of practice and ethics, a licensing body to ensure ethical behaviour and censure of professional members, agreed standards of knowledge and qualification that must be upheld, and serving the interests of clients whilst rejecting the profit motive. Finally, the paper has contributed to the debate on Management as a profession as it is one of the few to take an integrated consideration of all the key attributes required of the identified ‘true professions’ that have established over many years the societal expectation of a professional and professional practice.

The authors recognize that when the term ‘professional’ is widely applied to management, it is being used in a generic manner consistent with the meaning argued by De George (1999)
and Dellaportas et al. (2005) that the manager is in fulltime employment with a body of knowledge used in the performance of their duties. The authors argue that under this conception of professional, there is recognition that the manager is in fulltime employment with a body of knowledge used in the performance of their duties and that these duties are skilfully pursued applying knowledge towards a practice aimed at fulfilling client needs. This would apply to both for profit and not for profit organizations. In some sense this reflects a base level of the professionalization project set in train by Donham at Harvard Business School in the 1920’s (Stewart 2009). Though not a true profession with codes, licensing and regulation coordinated by a professional body management could at some point achieve a quasi-profession status (Denzin and Mettlin, 1968).

The contentious issue of fulfilling client needs remains a prominent feature of business practice in the 21st century as organizational goals may be at odds with client outcomes. These outcomes leading to what has been labelled unethical and unprofessional business practices which harm individual clients, classes of client, communities or society in general. Indeed, these outcomes have been the very catalyst for the arguments for management to develop into a profession (Cabrera 2009; Khurana and Nohria 2008; Khurana and Podolny 2007).

The authors concede that given the large numbers of individuals titled as managers or referred to as managers in disparate industries and organizational roles it would be close to impossible to create a sustainable professionalization process based on the profession classification. This would be the view at least in the near term. Current barriers to progress include a lack of drive for professionalization on the part of educational bodies, industry bodies, consumer bodies and government agencies in most jurisdictions as well as the challenge of securing the title manager reserved for qualified professionals. With the large
numbers of individuals titled as managers or referred to as managers in disparate industries and organizational roles it would be close to impossible to create an effective professionalization accreditation process for management to satisfy the attributes of the profession classification.

Regarding further research on the topic of professionalization of management, the authors believe there is still much work to do in attempting to identify key positive managerial practices and processes as an immediate issue rather than persisting with the call to make management a profession. As outlined above the task of ‘fitting’ management to a professional structure resembling the disciplines of law and medicine would be resource draining and mired in challenges across discipline specific jurisdictions not to mention potential national perspectives. The authors advocate for more applied research to be undertaken at the senior managerial level regarding integrity, organizational cultural impacts inclusive of norms of behaviour, integrity systems that ensure organizational goals remain ethical not just ‘barely’ legal, and ensuring performance management recognition and rewards align with organizational integrity. The authors of this article From the point of view of the authors of this article are researchers and teaching academics in management and business. We have all been managed and managed others in the public and private sectors as well as practising consultants in management and business ethics. From our point of view from both sound theory and practice more robust research needs to connect the pursuit of ‘professional’ behaviours and actions with positive intrinsic and extrinsic performance outcomes for firms. This nexus will provide clear evidence of both benefit and need for professional practice to underpin all management levels within businesses. Ensuring a role for ethics in the knowledge base and practice base of management is essential to secure integrity practice in management of businesses.
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INTEGRATION FOCUS

PROPOSITION 1
A profession is distinctly different to an occupation requiring specific attributes of qualifications, accreditation, standards of expected behaviours and practice to be satisfied.

PROPOSITION 2
A profession requires a specific and substantive intellectual component of expert knowledge to underpin expertise in practice with that knowledge applied to the benefit of the client.

KNOWLEDGE FOCUS

PROPOSITION 3
The knowledge underpinning the profession and its practice must be acquired through formal qualifications to maintain universally accepted standards of practitioner competence in base knowledge, skill sets and professional behaviours and attitudes to serve clients and related stakeholders.

ETHICS FOCUS

PROPOSITION 4
A profession must be supported by criteria of eligibility to practice inclusive of entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements which include a potential license to practice and stipulated professional code of practice.

PROPOSITION 5
A profession must be supported by a professional association or regulatory body the purpose of which is to ensure that members must fulfil and maintain; entry qualifications, continuing accreditation requirements and stipulated professional codes of practice.

PROPOSITION 6
A profession must have an explicit commitment from its membership to serve the interest of society by contributing to the common good and not exploiting the opportunities inherent in the power of professional expertise for personal or self-interest.

Figure 1: Conceptual Model - Classification of a Profession