

Professional Associations and Public Administration Excellence: The Case of Public Procurement

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Abstract

This article examines the professional certifications as a means for improving public procurement practice. Findings from a national survey show certification increases knowledge and skills, produces value recognized by supervisors and stakeholders, and contributes to career advancement, but that direct connections to financial rewards are lacking. The discussion considers possible ramifications of associations as vehicles for achieving public administration excellence.

This article examines what can rightly be called one of the great unfinished tasks of public administration—the professionalization of the public service. This is a contentious topic (Rohr, 1998), but critical to improving public administration practice. Frederick Mosher (1968) once called professionalization a conveyor belt “between knowledge and theory on the one hand and public purpose on the other” (103). There are now reasons to question both the functioning of this conveyor belt and its preeminence.

Struggles with Professionalization

Building a connection between academics and practice was possibly the most important goal at the founding of public administration, driven by a compelling conviction that science and rational methods could remake government and improve society. Apart from the oft-cited writings of Woodrow Wilson, other landmarks include the creation of the

New York Bureau of Municipal Research in 1907, the Bureau's establishment of a training school in 1911, and the publication of the first public administration textbook. In this book, Leonard White (1926) wrote of opportunities for the "elevation of the public service to the ranks of a recognized profession" and the development of professional organizations (203).

Amid the progress of the first century of the field, there was also some disillusionment. Some saw peril in professionalization. In one blunt example from the 1940s, Herbert Finer emphatically argued for strict political and hierarchical control of government administrators, in opposition to the professional approach advocated by Carl Friedrich (Stewart, 1985). Some years later, Larson (1978) laid bare the selfish motivations that drove professional ambitions. Reacting to this rising tide of negativity, some leading public administration authors questioned the tattered professional ambitions that remained (Bowman, 1982-83; Pugh, 1989; Schott, 1976).

Others sought to salvage momentum towards professionalization by mixing support for the knowledge and skills that professionalization offered with commitment to the general public good. York Wilbern (1954), for example, encouraged the training of generalist public administrators who could bring a balanced perspective to the public service. Kearney and Sinha (1988) built on the education theme—contending that education could reconcile professionalization with the need for bureaucratic responsiveness. Green, Keller, and Wamsley (1993) developed these ideas further, offering additional detail on professional roles and the need for normative competencies.

The role of the university was always a common theme in discussions of public administration professionalization, and linkages to universities were essential to the rise of the professions. In his classic article, Wilensky (1964) stated that the “more established” professions began in universities, which then “created a rationale for exclusive jurisdiction” (144). Frederick Mosher (1968) saw universities playing an important role in the development of public administration: “...university faculties will have growing responsibilities for preparing and developing public servants both in their technical specialties and in the broader social fields with which their professions interact” (219). Dwight Waldo wrote frequently about the intellectual development of public administration, of course, and he expressed some ambivalence about the role of universities. He acknowledged their historical contributions to the development of the field (Waldo, 1965), but also suggested that this might be “an accident of history” and that the “locus of creativity and synthesis may shift” (30).

A New Path to Excellence?

As this new century unfolds, it is possible to look back and see that many initial hopes for public administration have not become realities. Academic research thrives, but efforts to forge vital links to practice are waning.¹ Fractures with practice have widened in recent

¹ The decline of *Public Administration Review* as the premier *academic* journal in the field provides some proof for this claim, given the history of this publication’s efforts to bring together academics and practitioners. It may still be the journal of record, but academics often seek to prove their worth by publishing elsewhere. The impact of the transition from public administration departments to policy schools can probably be argued both ways, but many of these schools likely place increasing weight on more traditional measures of academic success.

years and excellence applied to public administration is now the more common goal for academics, rather than excellent public administration.

In their sphere of influence, practitioners are pursuing excellent public administration on a daily basis. Their need for skills tends towards the specific, and the ethical challenges they face are complex and daunting. Linkages to the academic discipline of public administration do exist, of course, but practitioners increasingly look to professional associations for education, training, support, and inspiration. Such changes have been documented in the case of the International City/County Management Association (Streib, 2005), for example, and city managers are likely more tightly linked to academic public administration than any other public profession.

This article examines professionalization from a practitioner and association perspective, at least initially, which is a twist on an expansive body of literature that has viewed professional development as emanating from higher education. Apart from the Waldo comment noted above, there has been little discussion of professionalization processes where universities are no more than a partner—or even a junior partner. This could be a natural progression, however, because knowledge is no longer a strictly academic preserve. What are the possibilities when professional associations take the lead?

The Case of Public Procurement

The professionalization of public procurement did not flow directly from the Progressive movement or the founding of public administration. The National Association of

Purchasing Agents was formed in 1915, but public procurement lacked a national voice until the creation of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP) was founded in 1944 (Callender, 2008). Granted, public procurement was once largely a clerical function (Humphreys, 2001), but it is now a focal point of government reform (Brudney, Burke, Cho, & Wright, 2009; Gore, 1993; MacManus, 1992; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992). According to Goldsmith and Eggers (2004), public procurement is now less about rules and processes: “Procurement officers need to approach their work as a search for the right mix of components” by “...making judgment calls every day in a constant effort to improve the situation” (166-167).

It would be a stretch to claim that public administration founders ignored a basic function like government procurement, but it does remain isolated from mainstream public administration research and education (Thai, 2001). The *Journal of Public Procurement*, sponsored by the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing, did not debut until 2001. Of course, anyone interested can publish articles on public procurement in any mainstream public administration journal, but this has certainly not happened in any significant way.

Professional Associations Serving Procurement Professionals

The National Council for Public Procurement and Contracting (NCPPC) was established in 2006 to serve as a united voice for the public procurement profession. NCPPC consists of seven charter associations for procurement professionals: CAPPO, FAPPO, NAEP, NASPO,

NCMA, NIGP, and NPI. Table 1 lists the abbreviations of professional organizations and credentials discussed in this study.

Table 1: A Guide to Procurement Organizations Certifications

Professional Procurement Organizations		Procurement Certifications	
CAPPO	California Association of Public Purchasing Officers	A.P.P.	Accredited Purchasing Practitioner
FAPPO	Florida Association of Public Purchasing Officers	C.P.M.	Certified Purchasing Manager
ISM	Institute for Supply Management	CCCM	Certified Commercial Contracts Manager
NAEP	National Association of Educational Procurement	CFCM	Certified Federal Contracts Manager
NASPO	National Association of State Procurement Officials	CPCM	Certified Professional Contracts Manager
NCMA	National Contract Management Association	CPPB	Certified Professional Public Buyer
NCPPC	National Council for Public Procurement and Contracting	CPPO	Certified Public Purchasing Officer
NIGP	National Institute of Governmental Purchasing	CPSM	Certified Professional in Supply Management
NPI	National Purchasing Institute	CSCM	Certified Schedules Contracts Managers
UPPCC	Universal Public Purchasing Certification Council	DAWIA	Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act
		ECPP	Executive Certificate in Public Procurement
		FAC-C	Federal Acquisition Certification in Contracting
		GCC	Government Contractors Certificate

We will refer to all of the credentials presented in Table 1 as certifications, as the use of this term is common; however, some do argue that the broader term of credentials is preferred due to variations in requirements. Typical requirements include attaining a certain level of experience, completion of an educational program, and passing an exam. In many cases, there are also requirements for remaining certified, such as continuing education. The DAWIA and FAC-C certifications are somewhat different from the others. The federal government issues them rather than an independent organization and they do not require exams. DAWIA is for military activities, while FAC-C is for civilian agencies. Table 2 provides additional information about the independent professional associations that support the procurement profession and connects them to any certifications that they provide.

Table 2: Summary of Relevant Procurement Professional Associations

Procurement Organization		Year Founded	Target Area	IRS Category	Number of Members	Code of Ethics	Work setting of Board Members	Certifications Offered
NCPPC Charter Association	CAPPO	1915	Public purchasing in California	501(c)(3) NonProfit	~1,200	Yes	Local government (9/10)	None
	FAPPO	1967	Public purchasing in Florida	501(c)(6) Business Leagues	~1,400	Yes	Local government (4/4)	None
	NAEP	1921	Procurement within higher education and associated communities	501(c)(3) NonProfit	~4,300	Yes	Higher education (13/13)	None
	NASPO	1947	State-level public procurement	501(c)(3) NonProfit	~120	No	State government (12/12)	None
	NCMA	1959	Contract management at large	501(c)(6) Business League	~15,700	Yes	Defense industry (16/25)	CPCM, CFCM, CCCM
	NIGP	1944	Public purchasing	501(c)(3) NonProfit	~16,000	Yes	State and Local government (14/17)	ECPP, GCC (Neither are Tested)
	NPI	1968	Public sector purchasing	501(c)(6) Business League	~320	No	Local government (9/11)	None
Other	UPPCC	1978	Public procurement certification	501(c)(3) NonProfit	~8000	Yes	State and Local government (3/12)	CPPB, CPPO
	ISM	1915	Supply management profession at large	501(c)(3) NonProfit	~40,000	Yes	Private business (11/14)	A.P.P., C.P.M. CPSM

As the association names in Tables 1 and 2 suggest, not all NCPPC charter associations have a national focus. CAPPO focuses on public procurement professionals in California, and FAPPO is for those in Florida—all other associations are national.

The board members of each NCPPC charter association tend to hail from a work setting that is critical to the mission of their association. For example, NAEP focuses on higher education procurement, and all board members of NAEP work for higher education institutions. One exception to the board/mission relationship is NCMA. The association is for contract management at large, but more than half of NCMA's board members work for the military or military-related industry.

Only two of the NCPPC member associations offer procurement certification. NCMA issues three certifications: Certified Professional Contracts Manager (CPCM), Certified Federal Contracts Manager (CFCM), and Certified Commercial Contracts Manager (CCCM). In 1974 NCMA established CPCM, which was the first certification offered by the association. NIGP offers two certifications: ECPP and GCC (though neither require testing). NIGP had offered CPPO since 1964, until UPPCC took it over. When CPPO was created, the certification was “the only professional certification offered by a national professional purchasing association in North America” (Universal Public Purchasing Certification Council, 2009: 3).

NCPPC does not charter UPPCC or ISM, but they are both national-level organizations. Most of ISM's board members work for private companies, whereas the UPPCC Governing Board is more diverse in terms of work settings. The UPPCC Governing Board includes voting members from NIGP and NASPO and nonvoting representatives

from the Canadian federal government and higher education. UPPCC also offers procurement two certifications: CPPB and CPPO. Historically, ISM offered three certifications, but is now phasing out two of them (A.P.P. and C.P.M.). ISM will only offer a CPSM exam in 2010.

The NCPPC charter associations, UPPCC, and ISM have working relationships with each other. As mentioned earlier, NIGP and NAPSO participate in the UPPCC Governing Board. All NCPPC member associations but NCMA are involved with the UPPCC Board of Examiners, which is in charge of the UPPCC certification exams, and NPI has been the public sector affiliate of ISM since 1990. Finally, with the sponsorship of ISM and the other NCCPC member associations, NPI annually awards the Achievement of Excellence in Procurement (AEP) to recognize organizational excellence in public purchasing.

Research Questions

This analysis presents data from a survey sent to members of professional associations serving thousands of procurement officials working in a range of settings. The focus is on the public sector, but responses from higher education will provide contrasting perspectives. Books and articles on public administration professionalization provide a rich conceptual base for this effort. In addition, there has been considerable empirical research on related topics in recent years. This research can contribute to the following ongoing streams in the research literature:

1. Past studies have shown that professionalization contributes to the development of knowledge (including ethical knowledge) and skills among senior, generalist administrators in city governments (Berman, 1999; Dunn & Legge, 2001; Streib,

1992). Related work has established the impact of the ICMA ethical code (Kellar, 1995; Rowe & Hug, 1990). However, these efforts have only looked at the tip of the public administration iceberg. This article examines the possible contributions of professional associations that lie outside the public administration mainstream, i.e. those associations representing occupations seldom researched and not commonly featured in university curriculums. Past work suggests that positive impacts on knowledge and skill levels are possible, though the focus has been on populations better linked to a public administration reform ideology and university course work. Past research suggests that professional certification will moderately improve the knowledge and skills of public procurement officers.

2. Incentives are part of any discussion about professionalization and skill-building and monetary rewards are not the only option. Perry and Porter (1982) argue that a strict monetary focus is not best for public sector employees, and research shows that public sector employees place more value on feelings of accomplishment (Crewson, 1997). Charles Goodsell (1992) argued that public administrators should approach their work as a craftsperson, "known as members of that select company, masters of the administrative craft" (248). Professional associations can provide this sense of distinctiveness and help practitioners achieve recognition for their work. Recent research has directly linked association membership to public service motivation (Moynihan & Pandey, 2007). This article examines whether certification leads to meaningful recognition. If so, then there is at least one motivator for this form of professional development.
3. Research on public employee motivation often discusses "balance," which is the relative weight that workers give to different types of rewards. Thus, when it comes to motivators, research suggests that (some) public employees give greater importance to intrinsic motivators than private sector employees. The conclusion is not that public employees are willing to work for no pay at all; extrinsic rewards in some form always have their place. As Wright (2007) found, extrinsic rewards that were "contingent on performance" had "significant influence on the degree of importance employees placed on their jobs" (60).

The pay for performance literature certainly suggests that implementation breakdowns should be avoided, including a lack of funding for rewards or bad performance assessment practices (Perry, Engbers, & Jun, 2009). In addition, recent research suggests that motivating public employees is not as straightforward as once thought; extrinsic rewards are more powerful for those at the top of the hierarchy (Buelens & Van den Broeck, 2007). Given the murkiness of the research on this topic, employers can certainly be encouraged to approach performance-related pay carefully, but the existing evidence does advise total abandonment of these efforts. This study examines two types of potential rewards for certification (in addition to recognition by peers): career advancement and financial rewards (such as higher starting salaries and bonuses related directly to certifications). The past literature does not offer much guidance here other than

to suggest that public employers are unlikely to provide dollars directly for completing professional certifications, regardless of how desirable this may be.

4. There is support in the academy for both public sector professional associations and accreditation (Cioffi, Lichtveld, Thielen, & Miner, 2003; Clinger, 2008; Hays & Duke, 1996), but it is possible that the field of public administration needs to reconsider the warnings by Frederick Mosher and others. Successful professions can provide tangible benefits, but control is their primary goal (Noordegraaf, 2007). Concerned scholars had expressed the hope that education would make professions safe for democracy—mitigating inevitable trends toward guild behavior (Pugh, 1989). Unchecked, the goals of the guilds could become paramount in determining a wide range of organizational decisions. Efforts to define guild behavior in public administration for the sake of empirical research are non-existent, but this study will examine some possibilities.

Methodology

Data Collection

This study uses the data from an online survey sent to members of NCPPC charter associations earlier in 2009. On behalf of NCPPC, NIGP conducted the survey about the value of public procurement certification. All members of each association received an e-mail invitation between 23 January and 4 February 2009. One exception is that NIGP sent the invitation to 9,898 randomly selected members out of about 16,000. The online survey closed on February 21, 2009, and the total sample size is 1,746. This analysis excludes retirees, respondents with less than one year of work experience in their current setting, and respondents whose work setting is not local government, state government, or federal government, which leaves 962 respondents.² Table 3 shows the number of respondents in each of these groups and their professional memberships.

² Other possibilities included education (K-12), courts, special authorities, private companies, and public utilities. Of course, a small number of respondents simply did not answer this question. Local government included both cities and counties.

		Federal Government	Local Government	State Government	Higher Education	Total
Sample size		289	256	105	312	962
Association Memberships						
	CAPPO	0%	32%	3%	7%	8%
	FAPPO	0%	37%	14%	3%	9%
	NAEP	0%	0%	5%	80%	19%
	NASPO	0%	1%	20%	1%	2%
	NCMA	92%	8%	7%	6%	51%
	NIGP	6%	68%	62%	39%	28%
	NPI	1%	9%	1%	6%	4%
Certifications						
ISM Certification	A.P.P	0%	6%	1%	9%	4%
	C.P.M.	3%	21%	11%	38%	15%
	CPSM	0%	1%	0%	3%	1%
NCMA Certification	CCCM	3%	0%	0%	0%	1%
	CFCM	19%	2%	0%	1%	8%
	CPCM	30%	1%	2%	2%	15%
UPPCC Certification	CPPB	1%	39%	38%	12%	13%
	CPPO	0%	11%	13%	7%	5%
Federal Certification	DAWIA	41%	1%	2%	1%	12%
	FAC-C	16%	0%	0%	0%	3%

Table 3: Association Memberships and Certifications by Work Setting

The sample population draws from the United States broadly defined. There are respondents from all 50 states, for example, and a representation across regions: South 48 percent, Northeast 9 percent, Midwest 14 percent, and West 27 percent. The response rate does reflect the large memberships of specific regional associations, like FAPPA (representing South Florida) and CAPPO (representing California), but they are counter-balanced by the larger chapters of other associations (like MPPOA, which is a Michigan NIGP chapter). Overall, the survey response rate is low in percentage terms, but the larger NCPPC associations included in this study offer institutional memberships, which greatly inflates their membership numbers. It seems likely that these institutional members would have lower levels of commitment to a professional association chosen by their employer and may be less likely to respond to a survey. Of course, these presumed

commitment levels also tell us something about the possible impacts of these associations.

Indicators

This analysis used sixteen survey items on the value of public procurement to create five dichotomous indicators addressing the value of public procurement certification, as follows:

1. Indicator 1 was derived from three items asking about procurement certification and the development of knowledge and skills. The respondents either strongly agreeing or agreeing with all three items received a score of one—others received a score of zero. The items asked respondents whether certification “increases self-confidence,” “increases knowledge and skills,” or “encourages ethical behavior.”
2. Indicator 2 was coded in the same way as indicator 1 for items asking whether certification improved credibility with internal customers, with the supplier community, or with senior management.
3. Indicator 3 also followed the same pattern as above for items asking whether certification increases “...opportunities for career advancement” and whether certification “has been a factor in advancing my own career.”
4. Indicator 4 addressed the financial value of certification. Respondents agreeing with at least three of six possible financial benefits received a score of one and other respondents received a score of zero. Items asked respondents whether their employer provided any of the following benefits:
 - an increased salary at time of hire
 - a bonus at time of hire
 - a salary increase for attaining certification
 - a bonus for attaining certification
 - funding for continuing education/professional development, or
 - time off for continuing education/professional development
5. Indicator 5 focused on hiring and promotion advantages and used two items answered only by respondents involved in hiring or promotion decisions. Those answering yes to these two items received a score of one, while others received a score of zero. The items were worded as follows:

- “When considering candidates for employment within your organization, all things being equal, does possessing a public procurement certification give a candidate a hiring advantage?”
- “Do you consider professional certification when promoting or recommending promotions of employees to procurement positions?”

Findings

As noted above, this analysis focuses on respondents currently employed in one of four public sector work settings: federal government, local government, state government, and higher education. Figure 1 shows the scores on the first four indicators for all 962 respondents. The scores displayed are respondent percentages with a score of one on each indicator.

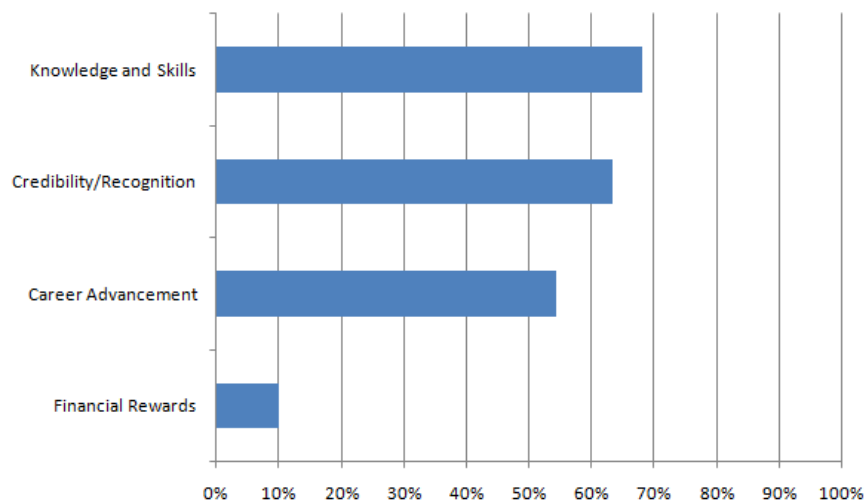


Figure 1: Assessments of Procurement Certification for Selected Respondents, n=962

The responses are positive, though they fall short of enthusiastic. Certification certainly requires a commitment and an investment. The survey respondents likely made a cost benefit analysis of a sort when considering the survey questions. On most items, a majority agreed that there was a certification benefit. The notable exception is for the

presence of financial rewards. The survey asked respondents to assess the state of affairs in their place of employment for this item. It is interesting that a majority did see career advancement benefits for certification and at the same time reported little potential for financial rewards.

The Association Perspective

To help sort out the many possible combinations of associations and certifications, this analysis first selected out respondents who were members of the dominant association in their work setting and who held the dominant certification. (The dominant association membership or certification was the one with the highest number of respondents for each work setting.) Table 3 highlighted these selections. For instance, 68 percent of local government respondents were members of the National Institute of Governmental Purchasing (NIGP), higher than for any other association. Thirty-nine percent of these respondents had the Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) certification, which is higher than for any other certification. Thus, this analysis uses the 88 local government respondents who were members of NIGP and held the CPPB certification. This same approach was applied across the work settings of local government, federal government, state government, and higher education. Figure 2 presents these findings for the same four indicators displayed in the previously.

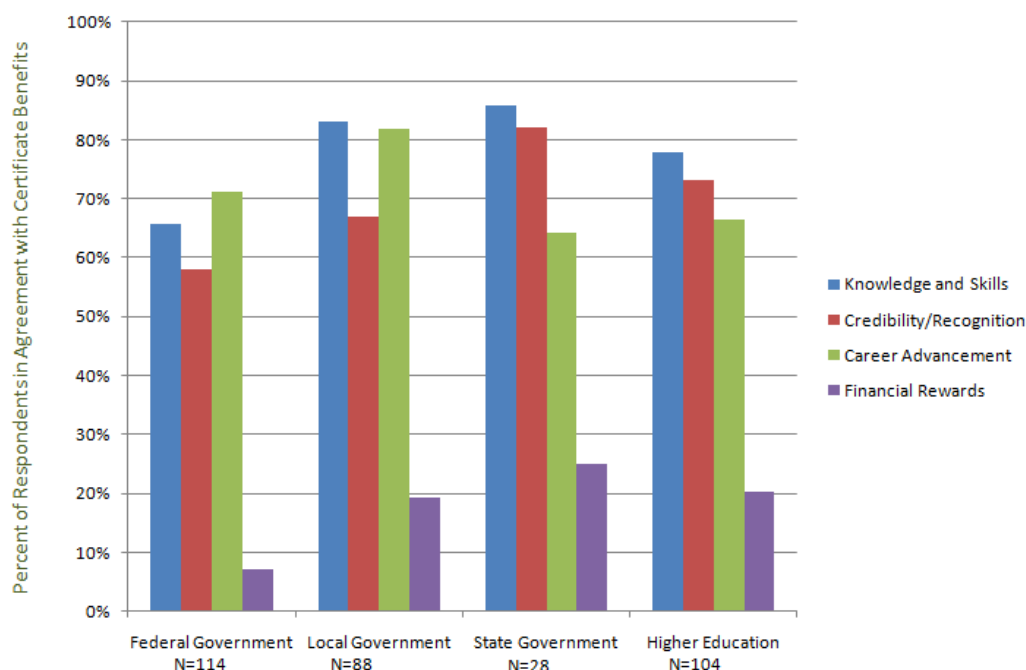


Figure 2: Indicator Scores for Selected Respondents (Dominant Association Membership and Dominant Certification), n=334

The responses to some indicators shown in Figure 2 are arguably in the enthusiastic range. Recall that respondents needed to agree with three items stating that public procurement certification increased self-confidence, increased knowledge and skills, and encouraged ethical behavior to count as a positive response on the knowledge and skills indicator, and over 80 percent of these selected state and local government respondents met this standard. This was also the case for 78 percent of the higher education respondents. Federal respondents lagged behind on the knowledge and skills indicator with 66 percent of the respondents in agreement.

While responses varied across the four indicators, the response patterns were consistently positive on three indicators: knowledge and skills, credibility and recognition, and career advancement. The lone exception was the low reporting of financial rewards, even for these select respondents possessing the dominant certifications for their work

setting. The relatively low ratings by federal respondents on all four indicators were also noteworthy.

An additional analysis (not shown) examining the impact of region on these indicators did not reveal any substantive variations. The one region-related discovery worth noting is that financial rewards for certification appear to be more common in the South—in Georgia and Florida.

Certification Choices and Indicator Scores

Figure 2 does not show ratings for respondents who made different certification choices, and Table 4 takes this analysis one-step further by extending this analysis to members of dominant associations who have no certification and those lacking a dominant certification.

Table 4: Association Memberships and Certifications by Work Setting

Work setting	Indicators			
	Knowledge and Skills	Credibility/ Recognition	Career Advancement	Financial Value
Federal Government				
NCMA Member/No Certificate (N=59)	59%	63%	27%	3%
NCMA Member/Non-DAIWA Certificate (N=93)	62%	54%	61%	4%
NCMA Member/DAWIA Certificate (N=114)	66%	58%	71%	7%
No Certificate vs. Non-DAWIA, Sig < .05=*			*	
Non-DAWIA vs. DAWIA, Sig < .05=*				
No Certificate vs DAWIA, Sig < .05=*			*	
Local Government				
NIGP Member/No Certificate (N=54)	70%	52%	37%	0%
NIGP Member/Non-CPPB Certificate (N=33)	76%	82%	82%	12%
NIGP Member/CPPB Certificate (N=88)	83%	67%	82%	19%
No Certificate vs. Non-CPPB, Sig < .05=*		*	*	*
Non-CPPB vs. CPPB, Sig < .05=*				
No Certificate vs CPPB, Sig < .05=*			*	*
State Government				
NIGP Member/No Certificate (N=29)	83%	66%	45%	10%
NIGP Member/Non-CPPB Certificate (N=8)	75%	63%	88%	13%
NIGP Member/CPPB Certificate (N=28)	86%	82%	64%	25%
No Certificate vs. Non-CPPB, Sig < .05=*			*	
Non-CPPB vs. CPPB, Sig < .05=*				
No Certificate vs CPPB, Sig < .05=*				
Higher Education				
NAEP Member/No Certificate (N=110)	50%	55%	28%	5%
NAEP Member/Non-C.P.M. Certificate (N=37)	76%	76%	57%	16%
NAEP Member/C.P.M. Certificate (N=104)	78%	73%	66%	25%
No Certificate vs. Non-C.P.M., Sig < .05=*	*	*	*	*
Non-C.P.M. vs. C.P.M., Sig < .05=*				
No Certificate vs C.P.M., Sig < .05=*	*	*	*	*

Table 4 shows a striking difference for those respondents with certification and those without. Among federal NCMA members, for example, respondents with certification have a higher score on all indicators but the credibility and recognition indicator. A Probit analysis shows that these differences are statistically significant on the

career advancement indicator--for respondents with no certification compared to those with certification.

For the local government respondents there are statistically significant differences between NIGP members without certification and those with a non-CPPB certification on the credibility/recognition, career advancement, and financial value indicators. There were statistically significant differences between respondents without certification and those with CPPB certification on the career advancement and financial value indicators. The results show just one statistically significant difference for the state government respondents; this was for career advancement--no certification vs. non-CPPB. As Table 4 clearly shows, the higher education respondents produced the highest number of statistically significant differences. For C.P.M. certification and the non-C.P.M. certification, compared to respondents without certification, there were statistically significant differences all four indicators.

Certification in Hiring and Promotion Decisions

The fifth indicator was limited to respondents involved in hiring or promotion. For this analysis, a positive response required agreement with two items inquiring about the advantages of public procurement certification in hiring and promotion decisions. Table 5 presents the findings for the same groupings used in Table 4. This table also displays the scores on the career advancement indicator (in the left-hand column). This indicator addressed whether certification increased opportunities for career advancement.

Table 5: Career Advancement Perspectives (Selected Respondents with Hiring Authority)

Work setting	Indicators	
	Career Advancement	Hiring and Promotion Advantages
Federal Government		
NCMA Member/No Certificate (N=21)	10%	33%
NCMA Member/Non-DAIWA Certificate (N=47)	66%	68%
NCMA Member/DAWIA Certificate (N=49)	61%	67%
No Certificate vs. Non-DAWIA, Sig < .05=*	*	*
Non-DAWIA vs. DAWIA, Sig < .05=*		
No Certificate vs DAWIA, Sig < .05=*	*	*
Local Government		
NIGP Member/No Certificate (N=17)	12%	35%
NIGP Member/Non-CPPB Certificate (N=29)	83%	86%
NIGP Member/CPPB Certificate (N=49)	78%	88%
No Certificate vs. Non-CPPB, Sig < .05=*	*	*
Non-CPPB vs. CPPB, Sig < .05=*		
No Certificate vs CPPB, Sig < .05=*	*	*
State Government		
NIGP Member/No Certificate (N=13)	31%	46%
NIGP Member/Non-CPPB Certificate (N=5)	80%	80%
NIGP Member/CPPB Certificate (N=20)	60%	80%
No Certificate vs. Non-CPPB, Sig < .05=*		
Non-CPPB vs. CPPB, Sig < .05=*		
No Certificate vs CPPB, Sig < .05=*		*
Higher Education		
NAEP Member/No Certificate (N=74)	23%	46%
NAEP Member/Non-C.P.M. Certificate (N=27)	63%	85%
NAEP Member/C.P.M. Certificate (N=81)	72%	86%
No Certificate vs. Non-C.P.M., Sig < .05=*	*	*
Non-C.P.M. vs. C.P.M., Sig < .05=*		
No Certificate vs C.P.M., Sig < .05=*	*	*

As Table 5 shows, respondents involved in hiring or promotion were more likely to believe that certification improved career advancement—when they held certifications themselves. The differences are striking for all groups and statistically significant for all

work settings other than states. (Fewer statistically significant findings for the state respondents are most likely due to the number of cases.)

The findings in Table 5 also show that respondents with certification were more likely to state that they would consider certification in hiring and promotion decisions. Again, right down the line with the exception of the state respondents, there was a statistically significant difference between the respondents with a certification and those without certification. Despite the low number of cases, there was also a significant difference between state respondents with a CPPB certification and those respondents without certification.

Conclusion

This article presents the findings of an exploratory survey study that examined some pressing issues in the field of public administration. Considering the bottom-line, this effort examined certification as a professional development tool, and the findings say much about efforts to professionalize public procurement. Those who have experienced certification largely agree that it increases knowledge and skills (encouraging ethical behavior in the process); improves credibility with internal customers, suppliers and senior management; and provides career advancement opportunities. In addition, association members with roles in hiring and promotion see certification as a factor in hiring and promotion decisions.

These positive findings should be qualified with the assumption that the responses to this voluntary study most likely reflect the views of those most committed to

certification, since they would be more likely to respond to the email survey. The range of views certainly suggests that these respondents provided honest assessments, but their views may differ from typical members. These same limitations apply to any voluntary study, however, and a broad range of association members had the opportunity to share their views. In addition, this analysis set the bar quite high for positive responses. Consider the knowledge and skills ratings, for example, where a positive response required agreement with three different items. Some qualifications do apply to these findings, but they do reflect the views of actual procurement officials with direct personal experience.

From an academic perspective, these findings from a single survey study add to existing knowledge about the role of professional associations in public administration. The indicators are basic, but they do address core issues. It would seem, for example, that professional procurement officers know if they are more ethically aware, if they had greater confidence, or increased knowledge and skills. There are other ways to assess these types of changes, but survey studies are an established method in the field. These findings suggest that professional associations outside the mainstream of the field are making important contributions.

These contributions are roughly consistent with what the academic literature in public administration presents as practitioner needs. The survey findings suggest that certification provides a sense of distinctiveness and accomplishment that is recognized by relevant others. There is also evidence that certification contributes to career success. Both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards appear to flow from certification. The type of

certification may also make a difference, but the sample sizes available for this study do not allow confidence about such distinctions.

The findings of this study are not all positive, however. The absence of employer-provided financial rewards is a concern. The lack of rewards could indicate an implementation breakdown of some kind. These kinds of problems have arisen before in government, and this is something for officials to consider. This study does not allow us to assess the available rewards in detail, other than to say that they appear limited and that they may well be uneven within organizations or across the nation. Future research could explore this issue further. The existing literature suggests that a muddled rewards process is likely to be worse than no rewards at all.

Finally, there is reason to ask if this study reveals the future of public administration as a field of practice, and this would not be entirely positive. It may well be that professional associations can supply the technical knowledge needed to perform and continuously improve the procurement function, but it is less clear that these efforts will also keep the focus on the public good. At a minimum, this is an entirely new take on the knowledge and theory conveyor belt envisioned by Mosher. This study gives no reason to doubt the capacity of the professional associations, of course, but there are differences between university training and certification that are worthy of additional study.

A related question concerns the role of the traditional—university focused—field of public administration in an age of increasingly capable professional associations. Are professional associations augmenting a successful academic field or are they correcting a failure? How wide is the chasm that the academic field of public administration is either

unable or unwilling to fill? Many of the concerns expressed about professionalization in public administration over the last 100 years are insightful and compelling, but there has been little discussion of the alternatives. Academics may think that the development of public administration education is something they control, but the development of knowledge and practice are not constrained by the borders of academic disciplines—certainly not now.

In the end, those seeking their own personal success or striving to improve public administration will find ways to do it, and knowledge of this fact might lead to some changes. Perhaps the level of leadership coming from the academic community has been inadequate. If so, perhaps both academics and professional associations can seek out new ways to enhance collaboration. This article may help to generate some additional thought and research on these important matters.

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