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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR PUBLIC PROCUREMENT AND CONTRACTING

Identifying Position Domains in Public Sector Procurement: Towards the Establishment of Standardized Job Descriptions for the Profession

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“If you think a professional is expensive,
wait ‘til you try an amateur.”

----- Paul “Red” Adair,
Famous Oil Well Firefighter

Agenda

- Introduction: Background of Professionalization
- What is a Profession in the Public Sphere?
- Is Public Procurement an Occupation?
- Are Public and Private Purchasing Different?
- Methodology Using KSA's
- UPPCC Job Analysis
- Findings: Identifying Job Position Domains
- Areas for Further Research
- Conclusion
- Questions

Introduction

- Professionals have realized a privileged status in society (Krause, 1996).
- MD, DDS, JD, CPA signifies higher salary, recognition, and appreciation.
- Occupations rely on algorithmic decision-making.
- Professionals make decisions that require expert judgment and prudential discretion.

Attributes of Professionals

1. Need extensive training and specialized knowledge
2. Paid for applying theory-driven skills in nonstandard ways
3. Higher Education
4. Autonomy
5. Acculturated to norms of conduct and guided by internalized ethical codes

Can Public Procurement Be Professionalized?

- Further defining *profession in the public sphere*.
 - Public administration should be predicated on political awareness and technical proficiency (Green, Keller, & Wamsley, 1993).
 - Requirements of the Public Professional:
 - Subject is sufficiently esoteric.
 - Subject matter requires academic study.
 - There is a barrier to entry into the field.
 - Code of ethics exceeds legal requirements.
 - A professional society monitors actions (Christiansen, 1994).

Public Procurement As An Occupation

- First, before professionalization, public procurement must be established as an occupation.
- According to U.S. BLS, the occupational group of purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents typically perform the following:
 - Evaluate suppliers based on price.
 - Interview vendors and visit suppliers' plants.

Public Procurement As An Occupation

- BLS occupational tasks cont'd:
 - Attend meetings, trade shows, conferences to learn about industry.
 - Analyze price proposals and financial reports.
 - Negotiate contracts on behalf of organization.
 - Working out policies with suppliers such as delivery terms.
 - Meeting with staff and vendors to discuss quality standards.
 - Evaluating and monitoring contracts for compliance.
 - Maintaining and reviewing purchasing, cost, and performance records.
 - Utilizing procurement systems and software to improve efficiency.

Public vs. Private Purchasing

- Second, public procurement must be compared and significantly contrasted to establish a differentiated occupation.
 - Similarities:
 - Cost-benefit decision-making
 - Process flow optimization
 - Execute budgeting & financial directives
 - Facilitate communication across departmental units
 - Sustain organizational continuity/ resource needs

Public Vs. Private Procurement

– Differences:

- Stakeholders
- Legal basis for practitioners' activities in discharging their responsibilities
- Organizational and structural boundaries of operative activities
- Functional activities and intended outcomes of practices used in pursuit of governmental obligations
- Solicitation process

Methodology Using KSA's

- To determine if public procurement requires a specialized knowledge base to warrant professionalization, a job analysis was conducted to better understand worker requirements:

Knowledge- The body of information needed to perform the job.

Skills- The capability to perform a learned task.

Ability- The capability to perform non-motor task.

Methodology Using KSA's

1. Examine the frequencies and distributions of the individual tasks and knowledge statements.
2. Run frequencies and distributions of the individual tasks and knowledge statements against the self-identified job titles (17 surveyed).
3. Identify potential segregations in the data set to locate job classifications.

UPPCC Job Analysis

- UPPCC hired Prometric, Inc. to conduct job analysis in 2012, a follow-up to the 2007 study.
- 36,564 surveys were sent out, 2,593 completed the 35-45 minute survey.
- The job analysis included 85 job task and 87 knowledge area questions with regards to performing the job correctly.

UPPCC Job Analysis

- Upon completion of the subject-matter experts' (SME) task force meeting, the following areas were covered by survey:
 - Procurement Administration
 - Sourcing
 - Negotiation Process
 - Contract Administration
 - Supply Management
 - Strategic Procurement Planning

Moving from a Job Analysis to Job Classification

- A job analysis is a process used to identify the important tasks of a job and the essential competencies an individual should possess to satisfactorily perform the job
- Good job analyses provide a basis for identifying the duties and responsibilities associated with a job to determine the appropriate position classification
 - Position classifications can help ensure equal pay, benefits and associated status for substantially equal work

Moving from a Job Analysis to Job Classification

- Position classifications lead to job descriptions which then lead to job specifications
 - A job description is an organized factual statement of job contents in the form of duties and responsibilities of a specific job
 - A job specification is a statement which tells us minimum acceptable human qualities which help to perform a job

Findings

- **Chief Procurement Officer (CPO)**- CPO's, director-level executive managers of procurement
- **Procurement Manager**- assistant director, program manager, program supervisor
- **Procurement Analyst**- contract administrator, finance/accounting manager, risk management supervisor, compliance officer, consultant, legal/admin counsel
- **Buyer**- intermediate buyer, entry-level buyer
- **Procurement Assistant**- administrative support, warehouse inventory manager, warehouse inventory support staff

Findings

- CPO's:
 - 82.9% of directors and 78.4% of CPO's perform or manage cooperative procurement with other agencies. 95.6% and 75.4% manage compliance review, respectively.
- Procurement Manager:
 - 68.6% of program managers and 71.9% of program supervisors perform/manage evaluation methodology and criteria but only 60.4% and 64.6% manage compliance review, respectively.

Findings

- Procurement Analyst:
 - 32.7% of contract administrators perform automated systems but only 5% manage; 69.8% neither perform nor manage establishment of mission, vision, values.
- Buyer:
 - 96.9% of entry-level and 99.1% of intermediate buyers perform/manage procurement method.
- Procurement Assistant:
 - Of administrative support surveyed, 61.4% selected methods of procurement, 48.9% conducted pre-bid or post-proposal conferences, 49.4% evaluate solicitation responses.

Conclusion

- U.S. BLS has established procurement as an occupation.
- Public procurement is sufficiently different from private purchasing despite similarities.
- The job descriptions indicated by survey respondents can be classified into position domains.
- The argument for professionalization of public procurement can be pursued.

Areas for Further Research

- Determine the job tasks and corresponding occupational duties that are unique to public procurement practitioners by using BLS as comparison.
- Conduct additional cross tab analyses to rank order job descriptions (job positions) based on common job tasks performed and uncommonly managed job tasks.
- Apply job specifications such as education, salary, and experience to conclude which, if any, of the five position domains should be professionalized.

Thank you,

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