

Public procurement and the BLS: operationalizing occupational duties

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Abstract

Purpose – Procurement is a specific, yet dynamic area of work and study that is recognized as an occupation by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). However, there is growing literature that substantiates differences in theory and practice, between procurement practitioners in the private and public sectors. The purpose of this paper is to validate the procurement occupational duties identified by the BLS with actual job activities performed and managed by public sector practitioners.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper is based on a survey of public sector practitioners to obtain information with regards to occupational duties and job activities in public procurement, as compared to a BLS proxy for procurement.

Findings – Public procurement practitioners complete the occupational duties identified by BLS, yet there is one occupational duty in public procurement that is absent from the BLS description for procurement.

Practical implications – Empirical data and analysis identifies the potential for public procurement to be considered its own occupation separate from private sector procurement, providing a foundation for development, management, and professionalization of the field.

Originality/value – The public procurement practitioners who completed the survey have a high degree of professional orientation based on certifications held and professional association membership, a foundation for generating applicatory results for studying the actual occupational duties in procurement. The specialized job activities performed and managed in perhaps the fastest growing occupation within public sector management are catalogued in this study.

Keywords Job analysis, Professionalization, Purchasing, Public procurement, Job activities, Occupational duties

Paper type Technical paper

1. Introduction

According to the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), “purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents” are recognized as a single occupation within the business and financial occupation group (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014a). Collectively, the three purchasing positions belong to the field of procurement, indicative of the strategic and managerial aspects of purchasing (Mol, 2003; De Boer *et al.*, 2003). However, the BLS offers no designation between “private” purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents and those working in the public sector. For other occupations within the BLS “business and financial occupations” categorization the sector differences are



apparent, such as “accountants and auditors” in the private sector and “tax examiners and collectors, and revenue agents” for the public sector, and “financial analysts” and “financial examiners,” respectively. Consequentially, workers occupying purchasing positions are deemed to belong to the field of “procurement,” without due consideration for the socioeconomic and political ramifications of the job that may require different occupational roles and responsibilities between the sectors (Thai, 2001; McCue and Gianakis, 2001).

The broad implications for the recognition of public procurement as its own occupation separate from private procurement are interesting to ponder. Aspiring practitioners, supporting institutions, job placement, skill acquisition, organizational behavior, and practical development are all aspects of the procurement field that may be influenced by distinguishing public from private. In fact a growing body of literature is starting to identify job domain differences of procurement between sectors (Ghere, 2002; Telgen *et al.*, 2007; Hawkins *et al.*, 2011; Arlbjorn and Freytag, 2012). If current research is correct, then the BLS may want to consider any differences between public and private “purchasing managers, buyers, and purchasing agents” that may exist and provide any additional occupational duties to reflect respective workers’ varying roles.

Just as important, by better defining the job tasks and responsibilities of a particular occupational group, users of the BLS *Occupational Outlook Handbook*, which delineates occupations and the disciplines within each occupation, will be able to more accurately treat items such as salaries, growth rates, working environment, and employment trends. Moreover, since the BLS is a central provider of occupational and disciplinary descriptions, employers, employees, unions, and students will have better information to make decisions. By uncovering occupational duties of practitioners in procurement a complex labor sector can be more precisely described and studied. To illustrate the complexity of the procurement practice, respondents from the public sector who participated in the Universal Public Procurement Certification Council (UPPCC) survey used for data collection in this study described themselves according to 16 different job descriptions ranging from chief procurement officer (CPO), director of procurement, and risk management supervisor to program manager, intermediate buyer, and warehouse inventory manager. Consequently, it is critical that the occupational duties identified by BLS for procurement accurately reflect any variance in job tasks, roles, and responsibilities that may be evident between sectors.

Despite the creation of a scholarly journal geared toward procurement in the public sector, namely, the *Journal of Public Procurement* in 2001, researchers in public administration (PA), public finance, and public budgeting have largely ignored the purchasing function (MacManus, 1992). Subsequently, labor force participants are oftentimes unaware of public procurement practitioners’ roles and responsibilities and if procurement is noticed, it tends to be dominated by purchasing activities in the private sector. Given the perceived differences in organizational objectives across sectors, such as profitability in the private and social equity in the public sector, it is reasonable to expect differences in the occupational duties of procurement across the two sectors. In the private sector, “the bottom-line” is the singular objective whereas social rights and public goods/services are main considerations for public sector practitioners. As a result, if there are differences in occupational duties between private and public procurement, then an argument for designating public procurement an occupation independent from private procurement may be warranted.

The main purpose of this paper is to compare the occupational duties of public procurement, indicated by public sector practitioners who completed the 2012 UPPCC survey, with the occupational duties identified by BLS. Specifically, the goal is to determine if the BLS is capturing the occupational duties that are performed and managed in public procurement. Prior to doing so, a review of literature defines occupations, how they emerge, and the managerial implications that result from being part of a professionalization process in PA. The empirical study examines how job activities performed and managed by public procurement practitioners from the UPPCC survey compare with the occupational duties denoted for procurement by BLS. Additionally, the academic similarities and differences between private and public sector procurement are discussed. The paper concludes by explaining the implications for recruitment and training, and areas for future research.

2. Theoretical frame of reference

This section constructs a theoretical frame of reference and is organized in the following two sub-sections: exploring how new occupations emerge and discussing the factors to maturing from a PA occupation into a profession.

2.1 *What are occupations and how do they emerge?*

Simpson (1985) believes sociologists need to more closely examine the nexus of occupations and organizations, instead of concentrating attention on the dilemmas created by transactions between professions and organizations. Each occupation has its own unique history and possesses a pattern of structural and ideological features (Lévi-Strauss, 1966, p. 24). "Two major considerations impel an individual to choose his occupation: the income it may bring him and the social status with which it is traditionally associated. With the first, the individual and his family may sustain their lives. Because of the second, society evolves a scale of values which are identified with the folkways and mores and which find expression in the social hierarchy of occupations" (Chen, 1947, p. 43). An individual's desired values and expression, and those associated with the occupation of choice, are reflective of self-image. A person's self-image is defined as a set of attitudes, beliefs, and opinions held by a person of himself or herself (Faunce, 1968, p. 93). In turn, a person's self-image is dependent upon the support, encouragement, recognition, and acceptance of those whom that actor shares a relationship (Salaman, 1974, p. 22). Typically, we build relationships with the people with whom we work; the people who share our daily experiences, sacrifices, and can relate to our interests and endeavors.

According to Freidson (1970), an occupation exists when workers perform the same activities and devise common methods that are used by new recruits (p. 71). In this manner, established practices become affiliated with specific tasks inherent to a particular occupation. Hughes (1958) observes that new occupations recruit from existing occupations leading to issues regarding formalized training for the new occupation that eventuates into a more formal credentialing system placing clearer boundaries around the occupation and governing entry (pp. 134-135). Thus, a conception of occupations involves sustained membership and the advent of institutions such as associations, unions, societies, and licensing boards (Abbott, 2005, p. 322). As an example, the development of the Certified Public Purchasing Officer (CPPO) and Certified Professional Public Buyer (CPPB) by the UPPCC illustrate how a new occupational area may be starting to take shape through a credentialing system.

New occupations develop when workers are needed by employers to do tasks that have not been done before or when needed tasks are sufficiently different from what exists and it becomes the primary job of enough workers (Crosby, 2002, p. 17). It is particularly important to the development of an occupation that individuals from different backgrounds perform similar services (Blum *et al.*, 1988, p. 112). Economic expansion, population growth, technological innovation, intellectual advancement, and changes in trends could all have the effect of creating new sets of tasks that eventuate into occupational duties that form new occupations.

The process dictating the way role bundles are made up and organized, the power exercised by those occupying roles, and how power is utilized are critical to better understanding the division of occupations (Freidson, 1985, p. xiii). The grouping together of role bundles, *vis-à-vis* declaration of the occupied roles as “occupations,” largely determines how workers are viewed in the labor force and by social networks. As such, the conceptions that persons form of themselves are based upon their vocations, the role they seek to play in communities and social groups, and the recognition and status which society accords to actors in these roles (Park, 1931, p. 37). And, people’s identities are not the result of any one single role because society understands people as multiple-role-performers rather than as a person with a particular role (Goffman, 1969, p. 94). Thus, the presence or emergence of an occupation that accurately depicts workers’ role bundles, and in relation their social identity, is vitally important to the individual, organization, and society.

2.2 What are the managerial implications from being part of a professionalization process in PA?

The acceptance of PA as a profession, the field to which public procurement belongs, would imply a certain level of distinction and autonomy for the field of study and practice. As public procurement further develops, whether it be as its own occupation separate from the private sector or part of the greater procurement occupation, it engages a professionalization process that has been taking shape in PA and the managerial implications are profound. Autonomy in PA presupposes freedom from close supervision and presumes discretion (Freidson, 1986, p. 147). The autonomy that comes with professionalism affects the processes by which laws are interpreted (Waldo, 1968, p. 145). Conversely, it has been argued that the efficacy of constitutional arrangements involving bureaucratic reasoning in the delivery of public goods has been the major challenge for understanding the behavior of PA professionals (Buchanan, 1985; Ostrom, 1974).

It is believed that the conduct of government and the adequacy of its public services are shaped by the performance of professionals in government (Gargan, 1998). Yet, management of government tasks is largely guided by theory and values. For example, Argyris (1991) cites the continual designing and action-orientation of public administrators on the basis of “theories-in-use” that may be tacit or taken for granted. Regarding public managers’ values the salience of power in the study of PA professionalism is paramount (Gargan, 1998, p. 1099). Different combinations of theory and value orientations create varied interpretations consisting of preferred political styles, public issues, and qualities of citizenship (Elazar, 1984). In public procurement, as one example, the configuration of the supply chain can be a determinant for the facilitation or restriction of moral engagement, whereby flows of materials, information, and money oftentimes serve as moral decoupling points that challenge values and moral responsibility (Eriksson *et al.*, 2013).

Despite some of the ambiguities that may emanate from professionalism, several arguments suggest that professionalism in PA serves to provide clarity. Ingraham and Rosenbloom (1989) believe that the “politics” resulting from PA professionalism should not be concentrated on political action or equity but rather the recreation of confidence in the expertise and competency of public administrators to become politically neutral administrators. Furthermore, White and McSwain (1990) support the idea of professionalism in PA through the creation of doers, those who have a direct impact on accomplishing tasks, not as contract managers, for example, who outsource much of public sector activity due to lack of professional ability. Public procurement practitioners in particular are oftentimes found to lack competency and have knowledge gaps in the areas of supplier-relationship management, production planning, and human resource management (Heilmann *et al.*, 2011). In response, many think tanks provide bureaucracy and public managers with advice or expertise in light of a perceived lack of public administrators’ professional abilities. No longer are expertise and knowledge predicated by public officials (Niskanen, 1988), the future status of PA professionalism will be largely dependent on the ideas, institutions, and policies that constitute public administrators’ approaches to governing (Harris and Milkis, 1989), which are largely based on theory and values.

The extent to which public procurement, as a subfield of PA, can be developed as an occupation, and be part of the professionalization process in PA has a major impact on the ability of procurement practitioners to delegate and execute responsibilities in governance. Yet, the extent and manner in which public administrators, inclusive of procurement specialists, exercise characteristics, or levels of professionalism in practice is highly debated. Before determining the ways and means for which public procurement practitioners complete their job tasks in pursuit of achieving good governance and providing public goods and services, a study of what public procurement practitioners actually do is first required, by determining the occupational duties that they perform and manage.

3. Methodology

If an organization, occupation, professional society, or accreditation/certification agency wants to determine the particular job duties and requirements for a given area of work it would conduct a job analysis. A job analysis is a process where judgments are made about data collected on a job, not the individual.

3.1 UPPCC job analysis

The UPPCC is the primary certification body in the area of public procurement, offering the CPPB, and CPPO credentialing process for individuals who are able to satisfy the eligibility criteria and pass a certification examination. In 2006 and 2012 the UPPCC hired Prometric, Inc. to execute a job analysis of public procurement in an effort to provide a defensible, valid, and sound method to test public purchasing practitioners wishing to become certified as either a CPPB or CPPO. For the purpose of this study, the 2012 job analysis is being utilized for data collection and analysis. The following task domains were covered on the survey:

(1) Tasks:

- Domain 1: procurement administration;
- Domain 2: sourcing;

- Domain 3: negotiation process;
- Domain 4: contract administration;
- Domain 5: supply management; and
- Domain 6: strategic procurement planning.

The survey instrument was sent to members of the California Association of Public Procurement Officials, Florida Association of Public Procurement Officers, National Association of Educational Procurement, National Association of State Procurement Officials, National Contract Management Association, National Procurement Institute, and the National Institute for Governmental Purchasing: the Institute for Public Procurement. The survey was sent to 36,564 practitioners; 30,980 e-mail addresses were valid. The survey invitation was sent on May 3, 2012. Two reminder e-mails were sent on May 23 and 31, 2012. It is estimated that there was a completion time of 35-45 minutes per survey. A total of 2,593 survey responses were received, where a return was recognized if the respondent completed the entire survey. Of the 2,593 survey respondents, 44 practitioners are removed because they responded as belonging to the private, as opposed to the public sector.

A word of caution is required concerning the data set used and the resulting analysis. Although the statistical analysis utilized here is not technically based upon a probability sample drawn from a known population, the respondents are members of 13 procurement associations in North America. The respondents are generally recognized within their fields to be “professionally” mobilized and have a good working knowledge of the discipline. Hence the authors feel the conclusions drawn herein are valid in that the factors considered and the conclusions from the data are focussed on examining the data at hand, not necessarily in drawing conclusions about an unknown and shifting population of all public procurement practitioners. There is no known data set consisting of all elements of this actual population, so claims are not made about this unknowable population set. Instead, the respondents herein approximate the distribution of characteristics from which the pool of respondents was drawn, namely, practitioners who are motivated to be involved in extracurricular activities such as membership to professional associations and attainment of competence certifications so as to most closely reflect the actual job activities being performed and managed in public procurement. These practitioners are indicative of a population set upon which statements about occupational duties can be judged. In other words, due to the respondents’ high degree of involvement in public procurement, it is reasonable to suggest that the job activities being reported on the survey instrument are actually being completed in public procurement. Table I reports respondent membership in professional associations and industry certifications.

Overall, there is evidence that most of the surveyed practitioners are committed to some level of professionalism as measured by associational networking and certification. Of the public procurement practitioners surveyed, 89.5 percent are members of at least one professional association and 72.9 percent have earned at least one industry certification. These types of individuals are most likely to be knowledgeable about what is occurring within and outside their immediate workplaces because they have embedded themselves in layers of social networks involved in procurement. This can be seen in the associations with which they have voluntarily affiliated and through participation in credentialing programs that award certifications upon successful completion. The results driven from these respondents are the most robust cases that can be made for identifying job activities and occupational duties in public procurement.

Table I.
Computed index
for reported number
of associations
and industry
certifications

	%	Frequency	Cumulative %
<i>Number of associations</i>			
None	10.5	267	10.5
1	36.7	936	47.2
2	38.8	988	86
3	10.9	277	96.9
4	2.6	68	99.5
5	0.3	9	99.8
6	0.1	2	99.9
7	0.1	2	100
Total	100	2,549	
<i>Number of certifications</i>			
None	28.1	717	28.1
1	49.5	1,262	77.6
2	18.2	465	95.8
3	3.3	83	99.1
4	0.6	14	99.7
5	0.2	5	99.9
6	0.1	3	100
Total	100	2,549	

4. Design of the job analysis study

Secondary data analysis is applied to compare the procurement occupational duties denoted by BLS with the occupational duties performed and/or managed by public procurement practitioners from the UPPCC survey. The job activities performed and/or managed by the 2,549 public sector practitioners surveyed are compared to the occupational duties listed by the BLS for the occupation of procurement. According to the BLS, “purchasing managers, purchasing agents, and buyers” are considered an occupational group, which is deemed herein to be procurement. As an occupational group, these individuals’ typical work duties, as stated by US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014b), include:

- evaluating suppliers based on price, quality, and delivery speed;
- interviewing vendors and visiting suppliers’ plants and distribution centers to examine and learn about products, services, and prices;
- attending meetings, trade shows, and conferences to learn about new industry trends and make contacts with suppliers;
- analyzing price proposals, financial reports, and other information to determine reasonable prices;
- negotiating contracts on behalf of their organization;
- working out policies with suppliers, such as when products will be delivered;
- meeting with staff and vendors to discuss defective or unacceptable goods or services and determine corrective action;
- evaluating and monitoring contracts to be sure that vendors and suppliers comply with the terms and conditions of the contract and to determine need for changes; and
- maintaining and reviewing records of items bought, costs, deliveries, product performance, and inventories.

The current research assesses if the BLS' description of procurement captures the occupational duties in public procurement. If public procurement practitioners complete the same occupational duties that are identified by BLS, then the BLS' description of procurement sufficiently conveys the occupational duties reported by procurement practitioners from the public sector. Yet, if there are BLS occupational duties that are not completed by public procurement practitioners, or if there are occupational duties that are completed by public procurement practitioners but not listed by BLS, then further examination is necessary to determine why the occupational duties reported in public procurement are different from the BLS' description of procurement.

To determine whether or not BLS captures the occupational duties completed by public procurement practitioners the UPPCC survey job activities are operationalized into the occupational duties denoted by BLS. The UPPCC survey respondents were asked whether they perform, manage, both perform and manage, or do neither, for a set of job activities devised to measure job tasks, roles, and responsibilities in public procurement. The UPPCC job activities are more specific in scope than the BLS occupational duties and thus provide for a precise measure of BLS occupational duties being performed and/or managed in public procurement. Note that Prometric refers to the UPPCC surveyed work tasks as "job tasks," or interchangeably "job activities." The method of qualitative logic used to address the problem statement is as follows. First, job activities on the UPPCC survey that correspond with BLS occupational duties are aligned with the matching BLS occupational duties (Table II). The public procurement job activities corresponding to each BLS occupational duty are clustered so that the combination of more concise UPPCC job activities constitute a substantiated comparison to BLS occupational duties. The job activities from the UPPCC survey are clustered and then converted into occupational duties for two reasons: first, job activities are more specific than occupational duties and therefore the UPPCC job activities need to be grouped into the broader occupational duties that are denoted by BLS; second, in order for public procurement practitioner survey respondents to qualify as having performed and/or managed an occupational duty, then a breadth of corresponding job activities need to be completed by the practitioner to ensure that the entire occupational duty, to a comprehensive extent, is being completed. Thus, the proportion of public procurement survey respondents that complete each BLS occupational duty can be calculated. The resulting percentages are used for comparison between the occupational duties completed by public procurement practitioners and the occupational duties of procurement as defined by BLS.

5. Findings

The procurement occupational duties identified by BLS correspond with those in the public sector. However, the occupational duty of "establish, uphold, and promote the mission statement, vision, and values of the procurement department" is performed/managed by public sector procurement practitioners but is not identified by BLS.

5.1 Results of the study

All nine of the occupational duties for procurement identified by the BLS are reportedly performed and/or managed by procurement practitioners from the public sector. Each of the nine BLS occupational duties is completed by a majority

US BLS occupational duties	Job activities from UPPCC survey	Respondents (%)
Evaluate suppliers by price, quality, and delivery speed	Identify evaluation methodology/criteria and select team (81.5%) Evaluate contractor/supplier performance (66.3%)	59.1
Interview vendors/visit plants to learn products and services	Conduct pre-bid or pre-proposal conferences (81.6%) Identify sources of services or supplies (91.2%)	78.7
Attend meetings, shows, conferences to meet suppliers	Conduct post-award respondent debriefing (70%) Review supplier samples or view demonstrations (73.1%)	59.6
Analyzing proposals, financial reports, and pricing data	Obtain historical information for decision making; forecasting/methods (83.9%) Analyze and evaluate solicitation responses (88.3%)	78.5
Negotiating contracts on behalf of their organization	Prepare negotiations strategies (64.3%) Conduct negotiations (71.6%)	62.5
Work out policies with suppliers such as delivery	Implement operating work policies, guidelines, procedures (75.4%) Implement a standardization process (materials, procedures, specs) (79.9%)	68.0
Meet with staff and vendors to discuss corrective action	Resolve contract disputes (74.5%) Resolve delivery and receiving problems (69.7%)	54.8
Evaluate/monitor contracts for compliance	Review requests for compliance with laws, policies, procedures (90.9%) Monitor contractor/supplier compliance with insurance, licensing, wages (71.8%)	68.5
Maintain/review purchase, performance, inventory records	Implement goals, objectives, measurement criteria of the department (66%) Utilize an internal automated procurement system (80.4%)	56.1

Note: Percentages are proportions of practitioners that perform and/or manage job activities and occupational duties

Table II.
Matching BLS
occupational duties
with UPPCC
job activities

(greater than 50 percent) of surveyed public procurement practitioners (Table II). As a result, it appears that BLS has done a good job in describing the occupation of procurement to include what public procurement practitioners empirically complete as part of their job.

There are, however, two job activities reportedly performed and/or managed by public procurement practitioners that do not correspond to BLS occupational duties, notably “establish the mission statement, vision, and operating values of the procurement department” and “uphold and promote the mission, vision, and values of the procurement department (e.g. ethics, diversity, professionalism, accountability).” The technical and theoretical literature indicates that the mission, vision, and values underlying procurement in the private and public sectors are different. Table III demonstrates the extent to which these two job activities are completed by public procurement practitioners: 51.7 percent of surveyed practitioners perform and/or manage “establish the mission statement, vision, and operating values of the procurement department” and 88.4 percent perform and/or manage “uphold and

Table III.
Public Procurement
practitioner
performance/
management of
establishing and
upholding mission,
vision, and values

Job classification	Mission, vision, and values		
	Establish	Uphold	Establish and uphold
Chief procurement officer	(88.8% (620/698)) [89.1% (623/699)]	(97.3% (675/694)) [94.6% (662/700)]	(88.6% (613/692))
Procurement manager	(62.5% (145/232)) [78.2% (183/234)]	(88.4% (206/233)) [91.5% (214/234)]	(62.6% (144/230))
Procurement analyst	(37.8% (353/934)) [67.2% (628/935)]	(86.5% (804/930)) [87.7% (819/934)]	(37.4% (347/928))
Buyer	(27% (127/471)) [57.4% (271/472)]	(86.9% (410/472)) [85.9% (407/474)]	(27.3% (127/466))
Procurement assistant	(23.4% (32/137)) [54.8% (74/135)]	(62.5% (85/136)) [79.5% (105/132)]	(23.7% (32/135))
All practitioners	(51.7% (1277/2472)) [71.9% (1779/2475)]	(88.4% (2180/2465)) [89.2% (2207/2474)]	(51.5% (1263/2451))

Notes: Percentages in parentheses are proportions of practitioners that perform and/or manage job activities and occupational duties. Percentages in brackets are proportions of practitioners who think the job activities are important or very important. Numbers in parentheses are the number of respondents who answered the respective question

promote the mission, vision, and values of the procurement department.” Additionally, respondents were asked about the importance within their job concerning these activities; 71.9 and 89.2 percent of practitioners think these two job activities were either “very important” or “important” for the respective job activities. Only 28.1 and 10.8 percent of respondents thought these activities to be of “moderate,” “little,” or of “no importance,” respectively.

To identify the extent to which public procurement practitioners’ completion of these two job activities could systematically vary according to job position, a cross-tabulation analysis was conducted to examine each of five practitioner job classifications (for a fuller explanation of the job classifications, see Prier *et al.*, 2013; Steinfeld *et al.*, 2015). Controlling for job classifications evaluates the extent to which practitioner’s performance and/or management of a job activity is random or can be explained by occupational factors – in this case, job position rank. If practitioners increasingly complete occupational duties while ascending the job position hierarchy, then this is evidence for higher job positions assuming a greater scope of roles and responsibilities and thus a higher rate of completion for occupational duties. The data are reported in Table III, and in general, the higher the public procurement organizational job position, the more likely they engage in establishing and upholding the organizational mission, vision, and values. For example, 23.4 percent of procurement assistants surveyed, 27 percent of buyers, 37.8 percent of procurement analysts, 62.5 percent of procurement managers, and 88.8 percent of CPO’s reportedly performed and/or managed the job activity “establish mission, vision, and operating values of the procurement department.” Additionally, 62.5 percent of procurement assistants surveyed, 86.9 percent of buyers, 86.5 percent of procurement analysts, 88.4 percent of procurement managers, and 97.3 percent of CPO’s reportedly performed and/or managed the job activity “uphold and promote mission, vision, and values of the procurement department.” Moreover there is also a similar positive relationship between job position and thinking these tasks are important. For practitioners who responded to the question regarding importance of each job activity, 54.8 and

79.5 percent of procurement assistants, 57.4 and 85.9 percent of buyers, 67.2 and 87.7 percent of procurement analysts, 78.2 and 91.5 percent of procurement managers, and 89.1 and 94.6 percent of CPO's reported that it is important to "establish mission, vision, and operating values of the procurement department" and "uphold and promote mission, vision, and values of the procurement department," respectively. Together, these two job activities can be combined to form the occupational duty of "establish, uphold, and promote the mission statement, vision, and values of the procurement department." These findings suggest two major implications for the practice of public procurement. First, the occupational duty "establish, uphold, and promote the mission statement, vision, and values of the procurement department" are completed by large majorities of practitioners in the public space, and these activities are widely regarded as important. Second, since ascending practitioner job positions is representative of having more years of work experience, industry certifications, and belonging to more professional associations (see Steinfeld *et al.*, 2015), the occupational duty "establish, uphold, and promote the mission, vision, and values of the procurement department" may suggest an overt orientation toward factors of professionalism in public procurement not recognized by the BLS and potentially those in the private sector.

6. Discussion

The findings suggest that the BLS effectively captures the vast array of occupational duties in public procurement with the exception of an occupational duty that explicitly deals with mission, vision, and values. There are three potential reasons for this. First, the BLS may have overlooked this type of job activity or duty and in the future may wish to consider inclusion of an additional occupational duty for procurement. A second possibility is that the BLS considered this type of activity but determined that all occupations exhibit this endeavor and is thus superfluous. A third reason for its exclusion from the BLS list of job duties might rest in the possibility that the BLS description refers to procurement in the private rather than public sector. This is plausible because according to the literature, private and public sector procurement appear to be similar at a glance, yet it is widely understood that the guiding principles and core values between the two sectors, e.g. the core value of devotion to the "bottom line" in the private and commitment to "social equity" in the public sphere are markedly different.

As examples of the similarities, the mission of the supply function in both sectors is to manage deliveries of goods and services in a cost-effective manner (Johnson *et al.*, 2009, p. 176). Financial management, negotiations, purchasing, contract administration, and evaluation are all tasks central to the achievement of cost-effectiveness in the public and private sectors. In fact, Muller (1991) surveyed National Association of Purchasing Management members in US state and local governments in addition to private procurement employees where the responsibilities of respondents between the two sectors was minimal. Only areas of inventory management, material flow, and special considerations for performance enhancement were found to be differentiating, with the public sector being less active in all three (Johnson *et al.*, 2009, p. 177). Meanwhile, utilization of automated purchasing systems for transaction processing and tracking as well as execution of multi-year contracts are becoming common trends in both sectors (Center for Advanced Purchasing Studies, 1999).

With the advent of public private partnerships (PPP) and public private innovation, there is a view that "public vs private" is a spectrum rather than a dichotomy (Boyne, 2002). Beginning in the 1980s and 1990s, the formation of PPP's established the

necessity of public practitioners to consider stakeholder interests such as business private investors (Kettle, 2002; Cooper, 2003). Opportunism is also prevalent with similar frequency in both sectors; buyers are more opportunistic in the private sector and leaders are more opportunistic in the public sector (Hawkins *et al.*, 2011, p. 578). From a legal and process standpoint, despite some distinctions, the similarities between public law of contract and private law of contract are more marked than the differences (Arrowsmith *et al.*, 2000, p. 14). Standard form contracts, dispute and revocation, and conditions of contract are all regulated equivocally across the private and public sectors. And, other than the funds allocation and solicitation process, the steps needed for procurement is fairly similar in the public and private sectors. For example, practitioners in the public and private sectors are likely to begin the purchasing process by researching products and services. In addition to lower-level tasks, some mid-level tasks such as pre-bid conferences and request for proposals may soon follow. Then, higher level tasks such as evaluation, contract write-up, financial analysis, and logistics start to take shape. However, the differences between the private and public sector become more apparent with higher level tasks. Consider that the manner in which funds are allocated to a procurement initiative is much different across the two sectors. A political process must unfold before a procurement action can first be taken in the public sector. In the public sector, politics governs the procurement process whereas political authority serves the regulatory function for private procurement. Additionally, open and transparent solicitation is often not required in the private sector. As a result, the academic differences between private procurement, traditionally called “purchasing,” and public procurement, may actually be more profound than the similarities.

Purchasing and procurement has been differentiated by describing purchasing as the process of supply chain management in manufacturing while procurement is a term used in governmental circles for acquisitions (Quayle, 2000; Bowersox *et al.*, 2002, p. 45). Telgen *et al.* (2007) observe that the demands on public procurement are greater and more varied than those on private sector procurement (p. 17). The significant variables differentiating procurement systems in the public and private sectors have been identified to be legal, risk, and operational factors (Jaafar and Radzi, 2012). The objectives of the public sector and its procurement operations are wider than the singular objective of maximizing profit for a given company (Murray, 1999a; Larson, 2009), and it is in this way that devotion to the mission, vision, and values across the two sectors may diverge. The different objectives involve the delivery of a wide range of public services, such as law and order, health, education, defense, transportation, the environment, and social services. Thus, the scope of public sector organizations is typically broader than the scope of private companies with regards to social equity and serving diverse stakeholder interests (Erridge, 2007). An increasing recognition of the strategic role of public procurement has emerged which applies what was traditionally regarded as cost saving functions to cover more general governmental objectives (Zheng *et al.*, 2007). The direct accountability to and responsibilities relegated from politicians in public procurement is another differentiator from private procurement (Murray, 1999b). Ewald and Freytag (2007, p. 31) find that, in the public, as opposed to the private sector:

- users are citizens not customers;
- target groups are identified according to rights not segmentation;
- changes are politically driven instead of demand-driven;
- services are mostly defined by experts and politicians and less defined by users;

- communication is geared toward regulating behavior and informing of rights, not positioning the enterprise; and
- public enterprises are budget-driven and less concerned about market innovation.

Arlbjorn and Freytag (2012) determined that clear rules and regulations play decisive roles for the organization of purchasing in the public sector, especially in the tendering process which can be described as share purchases in the public and lost-for-good or always-a-share purchases in the private sector (p. 214). Typically public procurement practitioners seek to include as many vendors as possible to increase competition, whereas in the private sector practitioners minimize the number of vendors in order to reduce risks (Vaidya *et al.*, 2006).

Public procurement has been defined as the “designated legal authority to advise, plan, obtain, deliver, and evaluate a government’s expenditures on goods and services that are used to fulfill stated objectives, obligations, and activities in pursuit of desired policy outcomes” (Prier and McCue, 2009). Public procurement practitioners serve a central role in determining how governments allocate resources that produce the goods and services demanded by residents in an economic and just manner (see Prier and Schwerin, 2014). Similar to Green *et al.* (1993) in terms of public procurement, what its practitioners do, and why, requires an understanding of its basis in fact and in law. While the legal authority provides the basis for action of government, it also can prescribe specific procedures in how to do things or how to set up the institutions involved in procurement (see Roman, 2013), such as through establishing and upholding organizational mission, vision, and values. These visions and values lead to the total mix of procurement decisions creating the governmental outputs that are thought to produce desired effects or consequences of government policy. Within these boundaries, what public procurement practitioners do in terms of their occupational duties becomes relevant to determining if in fact they can claim to be a separate occupation.

7. Conclusion

The occupational duties denoted by BLS for procurement are reflective of those completed by public procurement practitioners with the caveat that BLS occupational duties do not capture practitioners’ attention to mission, vision, and values being reported in public procurement. Hughes (1958) explains that new occupations form from existing occupations leading to issues of training and recruitment. Public administrators, inclusive of public procurement specialists, are responsible for providing a mix of public goods and services that may not be profitable to deliver and maintain whereas private sector organizational decision making is devoted to “the bottom-line”; there is no social function to consider when striving for unrestrained profits. Fundamentally, the mission, vision, and values of the public sector practitioner involve a range of holistic considerations in pursuit of good governance. The manner in which the occupational duties identified by the BLS for procurement are completed is reliant upon the overarching mission, vision, and values of the department. As one example, the solicitation process, which affects several occupational duties involving supplier relationship management, is vastly different between the two sectors, characterized by open, fair, and objective in the public sector and mitigating or subjective in the private sector. Therefore, the technical and academic training in procurement across both sectors can be fundamentally different. The values and judgments in the two sectors varies to

the point that recruits may exhibit greater interest in pursuing what could be considered a pure scientific approach to procurement for the private sector based on operational measurements of profitability vs a more artistic approach in public procurement that requires considerations such as quality of life and design of community for the consumers of products and services being acquired.

In procurement, public administrators must learn and develop through training the knowledge, skills, and abilities to adeptly factor numerous quantitative and qualitative judgments that affect specific procurements and the resultant implications for the goods and services that serve as an explicit foundation for society's functioning. It is reasonable to suggest that not all public procurement practitioners are prepared to calculate a host of value and social inputs that may be required for the job. In order to determine the process and competencies required to establish, uphold, and promote the mission, vision, and values that may be unique to public sector procurement, further research needs to be undertaken. For example, what factors should be considered in designing and pursuing desired mission, vision, and values? And, how will the success of stated mission, vision, and values be evaluated, if not wholly by measures such as cost-benefit or value-for-money?

Hughes (1951) cites the importance of professionalization as a symbol for the desired conception of one's work by associating the term with occupational mobility. At the group level, the identification process becomes central to how the occupation's valued model is conceptualized whereas at the individual level, occupational mobility deals with the skills that allow certain positions of the occupational hierarchy to be considered professionals (Hughes, 1951). This study's findings show that the completion and perceived importance of mission, vision, and values increases while ascending the public procurement occupational hierarchy. Yet, it is not known how effective or successful the implementation of mission, vision, and values are in achieving public benefit and positive societal outcomes. Distinguishing job position classifications allows for further examination of a more targeted population to study the process and factors by which departmental mission, vision, and values are conceived. The potential emergence of public procurement as its own discernible occupation enables enhanced recognition and rigor toward achieving an understanding of the treatment and conditions surrounding mission, vision, and values in the public sphere.

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