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Board Member Competency:
A Q Methodology Approach

Amy R. Hurd
Illinois State University

Brent A. Beggs
Illinois State University

Paul Fokken
South Dakota State University

The purpose of this study was to use developed competencies to examine their importance to current public parks and recreation board members. This was done using Q methodology to determine profiles of public parks and recreation board members and the perceived value they assigned to specific competencies. A principle components analysis was used to factor analyze an 11 x 11 Q sort matrix. The results indicated there are three types of board members including participatory, community representative, and conceptual nonpolitical. These three types had similarities and differences that demonstrated a better understanding of what competencies are important for board members to function efficiently and effectively.

Leisure services management practices are dependent on a multitude of variables including staff, corporate culture, and the governing or advisory board. The influence of the board is sometimes overlooked when in reality it can have a major impact on operations, decision making, and general management issues. Depending on the type of board it may have power to set policy, hold title to land, approve budgets, hire the chief executive officer, and raise funds, among others. Because of the power and responsibilities of boards, it is important to have a thorough understanding of boards and their operation. The knowledge base on boards in the nonprofit sector is well developed and continues to grow. However, the literature on the public and commercial sector is limited (Fokken, 2003; Hurd, 2004). In particular, research on parks and recreation is inadequate given the important role boards play in public agencies. This study is designed to give insight into parks and recreation board member competencies from the perspective of the board member.

Leisure services organizations are found in public, nonprofit, and commercial sectors, and all three have boards associated with them. For example, the commercial sector may have boards made up of shareholders or advisors; a nonprofit agency may have an advisory board or an independent board; and a public agency may have board members who are elected, appointed, or volunteer to serve either on their own or at the directive of the city council. Pointer and Orlikoff (2002) claimed there are approximately 3.5 million boards in the United States. Although the number of recreation related boards is unknown, they serve an important role. Board involvement comes from three types of boards in parks and recreation – independent, semi-independent, and advisory. Flickinger (1992) estimated that 26.8% of all boards are considered independent boards with 32.2% being semi-independent and 40% advisory. The independent board, found in all three sectors, is the most powerful of the three types having more responsibility than the other two. The independent board has the power to set policy, hold title to land, and adopt a budget. In a public agency independent board members are elected by the public, whereas nonprofit and commercial board members are elected or appointed by shareholders, members within the organization, or by current board members.

The second type of board, semi-independent board, is found only in the public sector. Board members are appointed, usually by the city council or mayor. This group has limited authority over operating policies and general administrative practices. Semi-independent

boards ultimately are accountable to an independent board, such as a city council. The independent board has the final decision making power, but relies on the semi-independent board for direction.

Lastly, the advisory board is most common in nonprofit and public sectors but is also found in the commercial sector. These boards are advisory in nature and not policy setting. Members may be elected or appointed and oversee their own affairs, but they have little power over decision making and financial issues. These boards are a means of community involvement for members and a way for staff to receive input on important issues from a citizen perspective. Regardless of power differences between the three types of boards, each has its own abilities to influence agency activities that drive administrative practices. Because of this power and influence, boards are instrumental in agency effectiveness making them worthy of scholarly study.

The purpose of this study was to: 1) use developed competencies to examine their importance to current public parks and recreation board members; and 2) determine board member types working in public parks and recreation. Individual board members have any number of reasons for serving their communities, and this study examines what competencies board members felt were important to their role as a board member. Once important competencies emerged a Q methodology (further detailed later) allowed for the creation of a profile of board members based on their ratings. The result is a picture of different types of board members in terms of how they value and view their role on the board. Understanding the values of individual board members may aide staff in working with the board.

For the purpose of this study competencies were defined as the skills, knowledge, abilities, and other characteristics that are needed to effectively perform a job (Lucia & Lepsinger, 1999). This definition of competencies encompasses so called "hard skills" such as the ability to set goals and objectives as well as "soft skills" such as being diplomatic and having patience. Competencies have a long history in the management literature. They were first discussed in the commercial sector and then in the nonprofit sector in the mid 1990s (National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration [NASPAA], 2006). The public sector is just beginning to

value competencies as a means to organizational effectiveness evidenced by the growing body of literature (i.e., Cederblom & Pemerl, 2002; Greer & Virick, 2008). The commercial sector views competencies differently than public and nonprofit sectors. The commercial sector follows the premise that because of the diversity of businesses in the sector, competency models should be developed for each individual business rather than as an entire sector (McLagan, 1997). The nonprofit sector has taken a different approach in that a set of competencies has been developed that applies to the entire sector (NASPAA). These competencies are now used to drive graduate curricula in many nonprofit management programs. The public sector competency literature is not developed enough to determine if it will follow the commercial sector or the nonprofit sector.

Competencies have a multitude of uses in management and human resources in particular. Lucia and Lepsinger (1999) posited competencies are used for such things as setting benchmarks for employees to measure their own skills against; developing a plan for professional development; and developing job descriptions, screening candidates, structuring interview questions, and evaluating potential job candidates. Furthermore, once hired employees can be evaluated based on expected competencies for the job. The variety of uses of competencies for important management practices serves as a justification for the body of literature that is growing in this area.

Literature Review

General Competencies

This study was influenced by past literature from two perspectives – competencies and boards themselves. Competency research has been a mainstay in the commercial (e.g., Cooper, 2000; O'Neill, 1996) and nonprofit sectors (e.g., Hoefer, 1993; NASPAA, 2006) for a number of years. The public sector, on the other hand, has lagged behind in realizing the importance of competencies to organizational effectiveness. This is true particularly for public parks and recreation as the literature is just beginning to be developed by researchers and used by practitioners. Preliminary studies in the field have established competencies for resorts and commercial recreation (Hammersley & Tynon, 1998), recreational sports (Barcelona & Ross, 2004), entry-level public parks and recreation (Hurd, 2005), and CEOs in public parks and recreation (McLean, Hurd,

& Jensen, 2005).

The literature on competencies has been tied to an agency's ability to change, improve, and become more efficient. Traditional bureaucratic organizations are coming under scrutiny because of their inability to change quickly and adapt easily to the environment. Bureaucratic organizations are mired by a high degree of specialization, division of labor, formal rules and operating systems, and a hierarchy of authority. Traditionally, public parks and recreation agencies are bureaucratic in nature, which can make them somewhat slow to change. Although one best organizational structure has not been determined, Lawler and Ledford (1997) suggested that rather than continuously restructuring to find the most workable agency, focusing on competencies may improve an organization's effectiveness. Competencies have always been a part of bureaucratic organizations in that managers in these agencies focus on finding people who have the best skills for a job (Lawler, 1996).

Ulrich and Lake (1990) and Lawler (1996) posited that a set of core competencies allows an organization to perform in certain ways that are critical to its success. In this case, competencies are not individually directed but are applicable for the entire organization. This idea bodes well with systems theory in that an organization is a system that relies on the sum of its parts to function optimally. If an individual or part of a system is weak, the rest of the system will adapt to this weakness. Optimal performance occurs when all parts are functioning properly (Thompson, 1967).

There are two prominent competency models in the literature that have their foundation in systems theory. First, Boyatzis (1982) indicated that organizational effectiveness within a system is comprised of individual competencies, job demands, and organizational environment. If one of these areas is weak, ineffectiveness will occur. There may be times when the organization can be effective, but it is not consistent when one element is not where it should be. Lawler and Ledford (1997) took this one step further and argued that organizational effectiveness is a result of "having a good fit among its strategy, competencies, capabilities, and environment" (p. 234-235). Dubois's (1996) model merged systems theory and a competency based approach to human resources management to manage productivity and increase efficiency. He thought systems theory correctly represented the impact people have on the organization and that by building individual competencies the organization

would be stronger.

In addition to systems theory, strategic human resources management (SHRM) has gained attention in terms of competency use. SHRM has been defined as "ongoing efforts to align an organization's personnel policies and practices with its business strategy" (Tompkins, 2002, p. 95). SHRM's relationship to competencies is based on the premise that organizations need to determine essential knowledge, skills, and abilities of the employee as well as those needed for the job the employee is doing. This process identifies the competency gap between what current skills are and what is needed. From here a training and development plan is created to close the gap between what the employee has and what is needed to maximize efficiency and effectiveness. SHRM is recommended to: (a) increase individual and organizational productivity and organizational productivity and effectiveness (Daley, Vasu, & Weinstein, 2002); (b) reduce employee turnover; and (c) increase organizational performance through management of human capital (Richard & Johnson, 2001). SHRM has received significant attention in terms of employees, but SHRM falls short with boards as little is known about the link between the two.

Systems theory, Boyatzis' model of effectiveness (1982), Dubois' (1996) model, and SHRM reinforce the need for highly trained employees because of the direct impact on the organization as a whole. Because they were derived from the commercial sector, boards are not a prominent factor in either of the models. Boards can impact long term and day-to-day operations of an agency and should be considered as part of the system in these models.

Board Competencies

Board competency research predominantly has focused on the nonprofit sector with negligible research in the other two sectors. This line of research began with Holland, Chait, and Taylor (1989) when they developed six competencies for board effectiveness. Subsequently, Jackson and Holland (1998) and Holland and Jackson (1998) sought further refinement of board competencies and extended the literature on what was known about nonprofit boards and their effectiveness. The resulting Board Self-Assessment Questionnaire (BSAQ) focused on six competency areas of board effectiveness including strategic, analytical, contextual, political, educational, and interpersonal. Each area had several competencies within them such as board requests input from persons to be affected

by the decision and the board makes use of long range priorities in dealing with current issues. In addition to the BSAQ these studies resulted in a demonstrated relationship between performance and competencies. Those organizations that had high scores on performance indicators were also rated high on effectiveness.

The 65-item BSAQ represented the overall best case scenario for measuring board competencies. Because these studies were completed on nonprofit agencies and universities, generalizability to public agencies – including parks and recreation – was an issue. Fokken (2003) tested the BSAQ to determine its applicability to public parks and recreation boards and found that four of the six competency areas could be confirmed after modification indices were added. Only educational and strategic indices could not be confirmed. Three other studies focused specifically on public parks and recreation board competencies. Flickinger (1992) identified 10 key skills board members needed. These skills were derived from the literature but not from empirical research. Galloway (1999) developed 42 competencies board members needed to be successful using a Delphi technique. CEOs, rather than board members, developed these competencies that included such skills as planning, fiscal management, and ability to work as a team.

A more recent study used board members and a Delphi technique to develop 56 competencies board members felt were important to their performance (Hurd, 2004). Like Galloway (1999), these competencies were a mix of characteristics and skills and knowledge. The Board Member Competency Framework (BMCF) resulted in eight general competency categories and 56 specific competencies. The competency categories included advocacy, board effectiveness, community relations, decision making, education and experience, finance and planning, interpersonal characteristics, and staff relations. The highest rated specific competencies were studying issues before making decisions; participating in committee and board meetings; understanding the purpose of the board; and having the ability to make decisions. It was the BMCF that was used as the basis of the current study.

When comparing results of Galloway (1999), Fokken (2003), and Hurd (2004), several common competencies emerged from at least two of the three studies. They included such competencies as the ability to make decisions and solve problems, ability to listen, and desire to serve the public. It was clear that the Galloway and Hurd studies were most similar in the competencies they discovered even though one was developed using CEOs and the other using board members themselves.

The foundation of boards as an area of study is built on systems theory, the nonprofit sector, and most recently public parks and recreation boards. This literature is just scratching the surface on what is needed on the topic; however, it serves as a solid foundation for continuing competency research.

Methodology

Q methodology was used in this study to determine competency profiles of board members in public parks and recreation. Q methodology was first introduced by psychologist/physicist William Stephenson (1953) as a means to study human subjectivity. This methodology uses an established set of statements about a topic (Q sample), and subjects are asked to sort statements from positive to negative such as most like them to least like them, agree to disagree, or most important to least important. Statements can be derived from either naturalistic or ready-made samples. Naturalistic samples are often derived from qualitative interviews with study participants. Ready-made samples come from sources such as literature reviews, existing scales, or standardized items (McKeown & Thomas, 1988).

Sexton, Snyder, Wadsworth, Jardine, and Ernest (1998) outlined several strengths to using Q methodology including: (a) results can be used to develop and test theories regarding people's beliefs, judgments, and attitudes; (b) fewer research participants are required thus reducing costs while maintaining power; (c) Q methodology controls issues of interview bias and socially desirable responses; and (d) novelty of the process increases a participant's willingness to rank order a large number of statements. In addition to the strengths of this methodology, there have also been several concerns raised about Q methodology. Bolland (1985) questioned a person's cognitive ability to sort a large number of items into too many categories with too fine a distinction between the categories. Some critics of Q methodology suggest that the small sample size makes the results less generalizable (Austin, & Pinkleton, 2000). However, Q proponents rebut that this criticism comes from a fundamental misunderstanding about the method. McKeown and Thomas (1988) suggested "the purpose is to study intensively the self referent perspectives of particular individuals in order to under-

stand the lawful nature of human behavior" (p. 36). It is not the number of people who sort the statements, but the relative position of each statement that is valuable to understanding subjective behavior.

Since Q methodology is rarely used in recreation research, it is easy to question its usefulness – especially when on the surface R methodology, or Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC), will do the same thing. Both methodologies could be applied to this research topic; however, the results would be different as they analyze different things. For instance, Q methodology seeks to understand how individuals think. Results of Q methodology identify how people with common views understand an issue, whereas R methodology describes the characteristics of a population that are "associated statistically with opinions, attitudes, or behaviors being investigated" (Brown, Durning, & Selden, 1998, p. 602). Q methodology is an in depth examination of how a few people think and feel about an issue. This intense evaluation requires a careful selection of subjects. R methodology, on the other hand, is designed to obtain understandings of samples that are representative of the population (Brown et al.). To understand the value of Q methodology it is essential to separate it from R methodology since the study is not rating competencies on a pre-determined Likert type scale and comparing responses based on demographic variables. This study investigates competencies in relation to each other rather than a set scale and results in a pattern of inter-correlations between subjects (McKeown, Hinks, Stowell-Smith, Mercer, & Forster, 1999).

The impetus for using Q methodology was that board members come from a multitude of perspectives in terms of experiences, education, political structures, and agency cultures, among others. As such, they perceive competencies from different frameworks and a single importance ranking of competencies may not best serve boards. Rather, it was important to uncover whether a subjective view of competencies provides a clearer understanding of the complexity of competencies for this group (McLean et al., 2005). While the results of Q methodology can be statistically analyzed and in this regard is objective, it is also a subjective way to look at individual's opinions and attitudes (Austin & Pinkleton, 2000).

This study used a ready-made sample rather than a naturalistic sample as it was derived from previous competency research on board members (Hurd, 2004). Seventy-seven competencies were used as the Q

sample that the participants were asked to sort. Although 77 may seem like a large number, Kerlinger (1973) posited that 60 to 90 statements were ideal to increase the validity of the results.

The sample size in Q methodology is derived differently because the focus is on sorted statements in relation to each other rather than the number of subjects. Thus, the sample size is determined by multiplying the Q sample and P sample, or number of people completing the sort. The sample size for this study was 847, calculated by multiplying 77 sorted statements (Q sample) by 11 participants (P sample). The 11 participants came from a randomly generated list of 50 citizen branch members of the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA). Members of this branch are most likely to be elected or appointed board members for public parks and recreation agencies.

McKeown and Thomas (1988) argued that rigorous sampling methods are not as relevant in Q methodology as other methods since subject selection is driven by theoretic or pragmatic considerations. Theoretical considerations assume that the person is selected because of their specific relevance to goals of the study whereas pragmatic considerations assume all participants are equal. For the purpose of this study, subjects were selected based on theoretical considerations as all subjects were public parks and recreation board members within their community and members of NRPA.

Once the Q sample was determined, the Q sort board was developed. The Q sort board is a distribution of spaces labeled with conditions of agreement from positive (5) to negative (-5). Subjects sort the Q sample through an alternating (positive/negative) systematic process and place statements on the board with the most important competencies placed in columns on the left and least important competencies for board members placed on the right side columns.

Once participants completed the Q sort, data were entered into PQ Method, a Fortran program designed specifically for Q methodology data analysis. Even though the focus is on human subjectivity, correlation and factor matrices emerge during data analysis. This is where quantitative and qualitative methodologies merge. In addition to matrices, factor arrays are also produced. These factor arrays determine a "profile" for subjects. These profiles list statements that are viewed as most and least important by individuals most identifying with the profile. Those identifying with one of three profiles are assumed to share common viewpoints (Dennis, 1986).

Results

All respondents in this study were over 45 years of age with 64% being over 55, and have served an average of 10.6 years on the board. Community size was measured using NRPA Gold Medal population standards, and all five categories were represented with 63% (n = 7) of respondents being in the 20,000-100,000 population categories (Table 1). Study participants were also asked to indicate the type of board on which they served, and 46% (n = 6) were on independent boards.

A principle components analysis was used to factor analyze an 11 x 11 Q sort matrix. Each statement has a factor loading that represents its correlation with the factor (Table 2). The defining sort indicates which of the factors the individual most identifies and where participant viewpoints of important/not important competencies are most likely associated. In addition to factor loadings, each competency has factor scores indicating level of agreement. The number of columns on the Q Sort board drives the minimum and maximum scores. For example, "be enthusiastic about parks and recreation" has factor scores of 4, -2, and 1. The factors scores indicate that factor 1 (4) felt this was highly important, factor 2 (-2) did not view this as important, and factor 3 (1) felt it was somewhat important compared to other statements.

In reviewing Table 2, keep in mind that each of the three factors has two or more defining sorts. This means that these individuals identified strongest with that particular factor. Although factor three had only two defining Q sorts, that factor, accounting for 13% of the variance, is created by the

ranking of the entire sample and not just the two who most identified with that factor.

Results of the Q methodology indicate there are three types of board members including participatory board member, community representative, and conceptual nonpolitical board member. Much like qualitative research, these labels were derived through a thorough examination of competencies that were highly valued as well as those that were considered largely unimportant.

Factor 1: Participatory board member

The participatory board member (PBM) works to make the board better by being willing to participate on committees and in board meetings; they study issues before making decisions; and they understand the role of the CEO relative to the board (Table 3). They also have an interest in and enthusiasm about parks and recreation. The participatory board member is willing to listen to the public and strives to be objective and fair. This type of board member focuses more on making the board work well together and less on technical skills such as having sound financial management skills, the ability work with the media, and raising funds. Overall these types of board members are involved in making the board function better through their participation. They value each others' opinions and needs of the community and work well with staff without overstepping their boundaries. This type of board member finds a balance between their roles on the board, the agency, and the community.

Table 1. Demographics

	N	Percentage
Age		
Under 25	0	0%
26-35	0	0%
36-45	2	18%
46-55	2	18%
Over 55	7	64%
Population		
Under 20,000	2	18%
20,000-50,000	4	36%
50,001-100,000	3	27%
100,001-250,000	1	9%
Over 250,000	1	9%
Board Type		
Independent	6	55%
Semi-independent	4	36%
Advisory	1	9%

TABLE 2. Defining Q Sorts

Q Sort	Loadings: 1	Loadings: 2	Loadings: 3
1	0.25	0.52*	0.35
2	0.74*	0.13	0.27
3	0.37	0.55*	0.32
4	0.21	0.49	0.50*
5	0.53	0.54*	0.03
6	0.26	0.69*	-0.14
7	0.73*	0.33	0.03
8	0.65*	0.16	0.21
9	0.22	0.04	0.89*
10	0.02	0.76*	0.17
11	0.78*	0.13	0.16
Variance Explained	25%	21%	13%

Note: * indicates a defining sort

TABLE 3. Participatory Board Members

No.	Statement	PBM	CRBM	CNBM
9	Be willing to participate in committee and board meetings	5	3	1
10	Be willing to study issues before making decisions	5	4	2
72	Understand the roll of the executive relative to the board	5	1	-1
8	Read and understand supplied information prior to board meetings	4	3	2
11	Understand the purpose of the board	4	4	5
43	Have an interest in parks and recreation	4	-2	4
44	Be enthusiastic about parks and recreation	4	-2	1

Note: PBM = Participatory board member; CRBM = Community representative board member; CNBM = Conceptual nonpolitical board member

FACTOR 2: COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVE

The community representative board member (CRBM) feels it is important to give time to the board. They value the ability to accept other board members' opinions. They want to serve in the best interest of the agency and study issues before making decisions. Table 4 illustrates how these statements compared to the other two factors. This group, however, did not feel it was important to have an interest in parks and recreation whereas the other two did. Unlike the PBM they did not value being enthusiastic about parks and recreation, and none of the groups felt it was import-

ant to network within the profession or learn about the field. This type of board member was willing to give their time and wanted to do what was in the best interest of the agency.

The community representative board member was willing to work hard and spend time in their duties as a board member. However, they do not necessarily feel it is important that they be interested in, enthusiastic about, or willing to learn more about parks and recreation. It can be argued that this type of board member wants to serve the community, but how they do it, such as through parks and recreation, is not as important.

FACTOR 3: CONCEPTUAL NONPOLITICAL BOARD MEMBER

The conceptual nonpolitical board member (CNBM) highly values seeing the "big picture" through a focus on planning, goal setting, and decision making. They have a vision for where the organization will be in the future. Furthermore, they are interested in parks and recreation and are users of the services. Like the PBM, they remain nonpolitical while helping guide the organization in the right future direction. CNBMs do not feel the need to understand the roles of the CEO and staff or be able to work with the staff. Like the PBM and CRBM, they feel technical skills such as the ability to work with the media, knowledge of construction and the bid process, computer skills, and fundraising are not important for them to possess (Table 5).

This group of board members wants to examine where the organization is and where it can go and then guide it in that direction. They remain detached from political aspects that can be prevalent on some boards by disregarding political contacts and devaluing working with political units.

FACTOR COMPARISONS

When looking at all three types of board members as a whole, there are several similarities among them. In this study, all three factors had 14 specific competencies that were rated negatively as not being important and included such items as being outgoing, learning duties of the chair, and the ability to raise funds. There were also ten competencies that all factors rated positively. They included such items as the willingness to study issues before making decisions, participating in committee and board meetings, and understanding the purpose of the board.

Results of this study demonstrate different perspectives on competencies needed by board members. Although board members are often perceived as being community servants and having a passion for parks and recreation, the results of this study indicate otherwise.

DISCUSSION

Research on competencies has focused on understanding what competencies can mean for an agency, which is to improve individual functioning resulting in organizational effectiveness. As evidenced here, literature regarding public park and recreation board members is in its infancy. Researchers are just beginning to understand and value competencies of board

TABLE 4. Community Representative Board Members

No.	Statement	PBM	CRBM	CNBM
4	Ability to accept other board members' opinions	3	5	0
12	Be prepare to give time to the board and agency	3	5	1
21	Serve in the best interest of the agency	0	5	1
10	Be willing to study issues before making decisions	5	4	2
11	Understand the purpose of the board	4	4	5
54	Be open minded	1	4	1
63	Be supportive of staff	0	4	0
43	Have an interest in parks and recreation	4	-2	4
48	Have an interest in serving others	0	-2	-2

Note: PBM = Participatory board member; CRBM = Community representative board member; CNBM = Conceptual nonpolitical board member

TABLE 5. Conceptual Nonpolitical Board Members

No.	Statement	PBM	CRBM	CNBM
11	Understand the purpose of the board	4	4	5
56	Have the ability to set goals and objectives	2	-1	5
57	Have effective long range planning skills	-1	0	5
31	Have the ability to build consensus	1	3	4
33	Have the ability to make decisions	2	3	4
43	Have an interest in parks and recreation	4	-2	4
69	Have sound financial management skills	-3	-2	4

Note: PBM = Participatory board member; CRBM = Community representative board member; CNBM = Conceptual nonpolitical board member

and enthusiasm about parks and recreation and does not want to be involved in technical aspects of the organization, whereas the CRBM wants to be the face of the board and make good decisions for the community. They really do not care that they are doing it through parks and recreation. This has been a misconception on the part of many practitioners and researchers that board members serve in their role because of a passion for this profession. For these people there are other more important motivators to serve.

When discussing important board issues, these two types of board members could approach issues from fundamentally different perspectives – what is best for parks and recreation and what is best for the community as a whole? Having an understanding of this difference aids in rationally discussing issues and solving problems for the benefit of all involved. Furthermore, CEOs can get a more lucid picture of why board members are advocates for different projects facing the agency. Thus, CEOs strategically ask individual board members to oversee issues that are of most interest to them.

Secondly, an understanding of what competencies board members feel are important aid in explaining board dynamics to themselves and the staff. For example, the CNBM (Factor 3) does not feel it is important to accept the opinions of other board members, while the other two types feel this is very important. Having a board member of each type on the same board can bring challenges to board effectiveness. In another example, the CNBM values innovation much more than the other two. This could impact decision making by the board in that those who value innovation will want new programs and opportunities for the agency, while those who do not value innovation as much may seek to remain consistent in service provision. Knowing the competencies each board member values contributes to a better understanding of how he or she thinks, behaves, and reacts to issues. This increased understanding leads to better board dynamics and allows the entire group to move in the same direction. Furthermore, CEOs can develop a better working relationship with individual board members as well as the board as a whole by emphasizing common priorities.

According to the literature, systems theory, and Boyatzis' (1982) model, a competency driven board creates a more efficient and effective board and ultimately an efficient and effective agency. This study further outlines what competencies are important to public parks and recreation

members. This study took predetermined competencies one step further by ascertaining what competencies board members value. The literature demonstrates an objective development of competencies, but has not examined board competencies from a subjective perspective. This study did that by having board members rank the importance of competencies thus gaining perspective of management behavior and values rather than just providing a list of competencies.

This study was undertaken to achieve a different perspective on board competencies in public parks and recreation. It resulted in three profiles or types of board members with a picture of their valued and devalued competencies. The question remains as to why practitioners and researchers should care about the results. Probably the best answer comes in terms of strategic human resources management. Much focus in human resources management has been

on hiring the right people for the job who has the competencies needed for effective job performance. Systems theory emphasizes that effective job performance is a key component to organizational effectiveness. However, in most cases an organization does not choose its board members, so why should anyone care about competencies when control is lost?

While a CEO cannot hire board members who are most qualified and who make the organization strongest, there are other strategies to enlist to improve performance. A few of these strategies assist the CEO in working with his/her board while the other is a means for board members to improve their own performance. First, for the CEO and upper management, gaining an understanding of why a person is a board member gives those working with him or her insight into what they deem important and why they are there. Generally speaking, the PBM (Factor 1) has a true interest

board members. Established competencies for board members work much like they do for employees. With this examination of competencies board members can assess their own strengths and weaknesses and map out a means to improve and benefit the organization by attending training and development workshops or conferences.

In addition to training, the idea of being competency driven can start even before the individual becomes a board member. Staff can manage some board aspects by writing board member job descriptions. Once accepting a board position, an orientation should be done to acclimate the newest members to the board and its inner workings. Board effectiveness evaluations can be conducted to measure performance, and a realization of the strong ties between a board and how well it functions can be gained.

All of these improvement initiatives are able to be used to direct the actions of the board and help board members have a unified understanding of what is expected of them. The challenge here is that some board members do not want to learn, improve, and grow as board members. Because they are not employees, the CEO is limited in what they can do with board members since they cannot be reassigned, disciplined, or fired. Realistically, in this situation all of the knowledge on board efficiency and effectiveness may be wasted on particular board members.

The last contribution this study makes to the literature is expanding what is known about competencies in public parks and recreation. Since the study used the BMCF (Hurd, 2004) as the ready-made sample, it is important to make comparisons to the original study. The original Delphi study eliminated competencies that were not rated as significantly important. The current study used the eliminated statements in order to determine if they rated low again. Of the 14 competencies all three factors rated negatively, only three were rated at 3.5 or above in the original study. This 3.5 mean signified that the competency was seen to have significant importance. These three competencies were to advocate groups and service organizations, read publications on parks and recreation, and have the ability to work hard and smart. However, in the Delphi study they were the lowest scoring competencies to remain in the study, thus giving credence to questioning their importance to boards.

In addition to having a consensus on negatively rated competencies, there were 10 competencies that all three factors rated positively. When compared to the original

Delphi study, only one of these competencies (i.e., have the ability to build consensus) was not ranked in the top 10 and was somewhat of an outlier ranked at 48. Making these comparisons to previous knowledge on board competencies supports the work done so far in this area. However, looking at both studies together raises several questions for further research as well.

Competency research in parks and recreation is limited and still a relatively new topic of study, yet it is vital to improve organizational effectiveness. Further research should examine boards based on structure and authority. Additionally, research should focus on what competencies CEOs feel are important for board members rather than targeting what board members think, as board members and CEOs may have different perspectives. Research into whether a board is more or less effective if they all value the same competencies would be valuable. It would also be beneficial to ascertain how board members' perception of competencies changes with time and with experience. This may answer the question how this sort of public service changes a board members perspective on their duties to the agency and the public. Lastly, a qualitative inquiry into board motivation and values could examine why people serve on boards, how they see their role in the community, and what makes a board efficient and effective. It would be most interesting to determine why those who were not interested in parks and recreation served as board members.

The three factors are a representation of subjective perceptions of the importance of identified board member competencies. This study reinforces the complexities of competencies and demonstrates that there is still disagreement on the importance of specific competencies for board members. Hopefully, it will serve as another piece of knowledge and understanding of the role of the board member and lead to more studies in an area of parks and recreation that desperately lacks sufficient research.

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