

**Do NASPAA Standards for Accreditation Matter? Perceptions of  
Executive Directors in the State of Texas**

**by**

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## **Abstract**

*Purpose: The purpose of this project is to describe the level of importance Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas place upon their knowledge, skills, and abilities for effective public management. The study uses common curriculum components for professional degree education of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) as the framework.*

*Methodology: Survey research is used for the project. Survey questions are derived from Brad Sinclair's 2005 Applied Research Project regarding City Manager Perceptions on which knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important for effective public management using the NASPAA common curriculum components. The surveys were sent to Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas. Descriptive statistics were then used to analyze the results.*

*Findings: The results show that Executive Directors perceive the NASPAA common curriculum components as important knowledge, skills, and abilities to possess for effective public management. The findings are similar to Brad Sinclair's results and give major credibility to NASPAA Standards for Accreditation of common curriculum requirements.*

## Chapter 1: Introduction

### Training Public Managers

A career in the public sector is a very noble calling. Graduate education in public affairs and administration provides the foundation to train future public managers to competently manage government at every level in the United States. In a competitive society with emerging technology and increased service demands from citizens, public officials must possess certain knowledge, skills, and abilities to properly serve the public good. Financial constraints and a constant political environment create new challenges for the current and future generations of public servants.

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration<sup>1</sup> (NASPAA) is a private non-profit organization that accredits graduate schools in public affairs and administration in the United States (Breux, Clynch, and Morris 2003). The main purpose of NASPAA is defined in the following statement (Breux, Clynch, and Morris 2003, 259-260):

NASPAA's accreditation of professional master of public affairs and administration degrees is intended to provide prospective students, professional associations, employers, and the public with the names of academic programs that deliver a basic level of educational quality. NASPAA's curriculum standards serve as a key element to ensure quality in public affairs and administration master's programs.

Accreditation<sup>2</sup> keeps professional graduate programs accountable and credible to the outside communities that have a vested interest in the graduates that they continue to

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<sup>1</sup> Chapter 2 provides more detailed information about NASPAA

<sup>2</sup> NASPAA Standards for Accreditation can be accessed at the following website:  
[http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/seeking/pdf/Standards\\_2005.pdf](http://www.naspaa.org/accreditation/seeking/pdf/Standards_2005.pdf)

produce. This applied research project (ARP) attempts to determine whether NASPAA Standards for Accreditation are useful for training effective public managers.

### **Research Purpose**

The purpose of this project is to describe the level of importance Executive Directors of public agencies in the state of Texas place upon their knowledge, skills, and abilities for effective public management. The study uses common curriculum components for professional degree education of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) to assess which knowledge, skills, and abilities are needed for public management. The common curriculum components are used as the framework for describing Executive Director perceptions (Sinclair 2005). The descriptive categories<sup>3</sup> used for the project are *management of public service organizations, application of quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis, understanding of the public policy and organizational environment, administrative ethics, and skill set* which comprise the knowledge, skills, and abilities measured in this study.

This study could be useful in several ways. This applied research project (ARP) will be compared to Brad Sinclair's fall 2005 Study<sup>4</sup> titled *What Do Texas City Managers Value? An Examination of NASPAA Accreditation Standards*. Sinclair's results section shows responses from City Managers through the use of surveys to gain their perceptions of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for city management. This study will

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<sup>3</sup>The descriptive categories and sub-categories are placed in italics in paragraphs throughout this project unless they are mentioned in a quote.

<sup>4</sup>An electronic copy of Brad Sinclair's Study can be found at the following website: <http://ecommons.txstate.edu/arp/32/>

attempt to shed light onto the perceptions of Executive Directors in the state of Texas. Executive Directors in the state of Texas are appointed as the chief administrators of certain agencies (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001). No current study exists on what Executive Directors perceive as the most important and useful knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective public management. These perceptions can help students and current professionals seeking employment in state government.

Research in this area can further expand the goals of educating public servants in graduate programs of public affairs and administration. Aristigueta and Raffel (2001, 161) find that “NASPAA requirements specify core competencies rather than specific courses.” The role of creating courses to fulfill NASPAA requirements is an ardent task that confronts professors attempting to educate public administrators and policy analysts. This study can help reveal skills that practitioners find useful in their everyday management of public agencies at the state level. Developing curricula to meet the needs of public service is an excellent way to help professional graduate degree programs enhance their reputation and credibility by sending their graduates into the public workforce with the necessary skills to succeed in a competitive marketplace.

Finally, future and current public administrators can use this study as a guide to gain a greater understanding of what a career in state government will entail and what skills are necessary to gain when deciding which graduate program to attend in order to develop as professionals. Cleary (1990, 664) states, “Specialists are needed in accounting, contracting, finance, personnel, and a variety of other fields, but also needed are administrators with competence in the techniques and methods of organization and management and with understanding of the political, social, and economic environments

in which they operate.” This ARP will attempt to shed light onto the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective public management in Texas State government. NASPAA can use this information in updating their accreditation standards for MPA programs.

### **Chapter Summaries**

This paper consists of five chapters to accomplish the research purpose. Chapter 2 is the literature review for graduate education in public affairs and administration along with the NASPAA Standards for Accreditation. The descriptive categories for this project are described and tied to the literature. Chapter 3 provides the survey instrument for the research and discusses the population, unit of analysis, and the statistics used in this project. Chapter 4 discusses the results of the survey research with data analysis. The final chapter, Chapter 5, discusses the findings of the research and provides recommendations for future research.



## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

### **Chapter Purpose**

This chapter examines the scholarly literature related to public affairs and administration education. It specifically focuses on the current role of the National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) in accrediting graduate programs and the specific standards that comprise the accreditation process. The chapter also looks into the history of education in public affairs and administration and the current state of the Master of Public Administration degree. This information is critical to understanding why certain skills comprise the common curriculum of graduate programs in public affairs and administration. NASPAA Accreditation Standards serve as the framework and are further developed throughout the chapter.

### **History of Public Affairs and Administration Education**

Public Affairs and Administration are practitioner-oriented fields of study. A search for their role in the academic community is a question that continually confronts scholars and practitioners. It is a relatively new area of inquiry in comparison to other academic specializations and stems from the discipline of Political Science. The split between a focus upon administration rather than pure political science traces back to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in America. As Woodrow Wilson (1887, 200) states in his famous 1887 *Political Science Quarterly* essay, “Administrative tasks have nowadays to be so studiously and systematically adjusted to carefully tested standards of policy, the reason why we are having now what we never had before, a science of administration.” Wilson’s insight led to the enlightenment that the discipline of administering the public bureaucracy is an ardent task the government must take seriously in order to properly and

ethically serve the citizenry. Through massive government reforms, administration was slowly acknowledged as a separate field of study around the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Graduate education in public affairs and administration has been recognized as a discipline by the academic community for eighty-two years. Public affairs and administration first entered the academic world at Syracuse University in 1924 with six students when the institution created the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. The goal of the school was to produce graduates to go into government service and run the bureaucracy (Kettl 2002).

Woodrow Wilson (1887) argues that there is a need for well-schooled public servants sensitive to public opinion. Wilson (1887, 221) goes on to state that “the principles on which to base a science of administration for America must be principles which have democratic policy very much at heart.” In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were major debates about the appropriate principles that should apply to graduate education in public affairs and administration. Should there be an emphasis on public management and organizational theory, or should education focus upon microeconomic decision making analysis?

Public affairs and administration became separate entities in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Public administration turned to a more practitioner-oriented field which focused upon public management. Public affairs programs focused upon policy analysis and turned to a more rigorous quantitative approach to educating future government officials. As Kettl (2002, 13) asserts, “the public policy movement grew from an assumption that orthodox public administration had reached a dead end.” Public administration was viewed as a

discipline meant to train public managers. The mission of public affairs programs was to train policy analysts through rigorous quantitative analysis.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were major debates about the appropriate knowledge principles that should apply to graduate education in public affairs and administration. Spicer (2001, 68) asserts that people “in the field often have radically different ideas about how to organize and manage public administration, about the role that politics and values should play in determining administrative actions, and about what is the appropriate character of scientific inquiry within public administration.” Institutions must decide the most appropriate methods to educate students.

Public management and policy analysis came together in the 1960s and 1970s. Kettl (2002, 17) states that “new interdisciplinary public policy programs sprang up in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These programs focused on how to improve the performance of public programs and on how to make public managers more effective in managing these programs.” This shift marked a new identity for public affairs and administration education. Unfortunately, due to the lack of public trust in government after the Watergate scandals in 1974, the public bureaucracy received extensive criticism which forced politicians to attack big government. Government was seen as ineffective and corrupt, which led to a major conservative movement in America during the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Government cutbacks and a new reinventing government movement changed the political landscape of American society (Spicer 2004).

In the 1990s the Clinton administration, under the direction of Vice President Al Gore, set up the National Performance Review (NPR) in order to combat ineffective government. NPR stemmed from the reinventing government movement in that it seeks

the objectives of “empowering employees, inducing a less risk-averse culture, and enhancing the quality of service delivery” (Thompson 2000, 6). The current Bush administration adheres to the objectives of NPR and continues to solidify the performance review of the federal bureaucracy (Kettl 2002). Many scholars have praised NPR, but Thompson (2000) finds that most of the objectives set out by NPR to reinvent government have not been met in many federal agencies such as the Social Security Administration. More time and research is needed to properly evaluate the effectiveness of NPR in the federal government. Public managers must be competent to operate in a political environment that stresses the need for less government.

### **The MPA Degree**

The Master of Public Administration degree is very broad and flexible. It is meant to educate current and future public managers with the skills necessary to compete in the realm of the public sector. There is a strong emphasis on policy, finance, research methods, management, ethical dilemmas, information technology, and various other skills necessary for public management. Various institutions offer this degree to suit the needs of certain geographical regions and government employees. The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (2005) affirms that there are one hundred twenty-nine accredited programs offering the MPA degree throughout America. Students that obtain the MPA degree possess strong managerial and quantitative skills to effectively manage organizations. Denhart (2001, 529) believes that “public administrators not only need to acquire knowledge about a field, they need to develop skills to affect change in the public sector, and they need a certain psychological

grounding or maturity to do so in the most effective and responsible way.” The MPA is a practitioner-oriented degree for the public sector.

MPA programs are very diverse in their curriculum requirements and institutional setting. All MPA programs have a core curriculum with specializations or minors to meet students’ career goals in the public sector. Robert Cleary (1990) finds that MPA programs situate in either a political science department; public affairs school, college, institute, or center; public administration unit of a school or college of arts and sciences, social science, or professional program, business school, public policy program, or an integrated management school. Roeder and Whitaker (1993, 513) show that “academic programs will tend to have either an ‘institutional-management’ or ‘analytical’ focus in their core curricula.”

MPA core curriculum consists of various courses. Deviations can exist from program to program regarding core content requirements. From surveying NASPAA member schools on their curriculum, Breaux, Clynch, and Morris (2003, 261) found that “NASPAA recognizes that programs will have differing missions and approaches to achieving excellence in public affairs education.” In order to produce a national core consistency in curriculum, MPA programs can elect to gain accreditation by becoming members of NASPAA and follow their standards. Many MPA programs have strong mission statements regarding the preparation of their students. Faculty expertise can vary from program to program since MPA course descriptions are very uniquely situated to certain institutions in the United States (NASPAA 2005).

Research methods are very common subjects of MPA curriculum. From examining other scholars’ data, Aristigueta and Raffel (2001, 163) find that “most

programs either teach traditional research methods, including basic statistics, or micro-economic analysis.” But, Kraemer and Perry (1989, 9) show “the field has yet to find a strategy for linking important research questions with the techniques for answering them.” Thus, Aristigueta and Raffel (2001, 165) argue that MPA programs need to focus on management rather than research “because MPA Programs are preparing managers.”

### **Theory versus Practice**

Theory relates to the principles or concepts of a practice. Shields and Tajalli (2005, 5) state that “theory is used to organize exploration of the problem at hand.”

Public administration has roots in both theoretical and practical frameworks.

Raadschelders (1999) believes that continental Europe uses theory as the foundation for public administration, while Britain and America use practice to initiate the discipline of public administration. Theory relates more to the research and the abstract elements of the discipline. Practice relates to the managerial and quantitative aspects of public administration. Denhart (2001) raises the question of whether public administration programs should educate their students with regard to theory or practice. This debate on the proper position that theory and practice should have in public administration continues to perplex scholars in the field.

Theory serves as the foundation for every field of inquiry, but does it prepare students to successfully enter a career in public service? McSwite (2001, 111) argues that “having a competence in theory does not mean the acquisition of an identifiable set of substantive knowledge.” Practitioner education is vital in training future and current public administrators. Milam (2003, 364) states “within the classroom setting, bringing

issues and theory to light through simulation creates an active environment for students to explore their own interests in public administration and, it is hoped, to enhance future scholarship and participation in the field of public administration.” Practitioner input upon an MPA education can counteract theoretical training and show the practical aspects of everyday decision-making.

Since the theory versus practice debate persists in public administration, the field is in a state of identity crisis. Neumann (1996, 414) asserts “does it not seem that the profession lacks a unified central academic element? Is it not possible for anyone, whatever his or her previous academic background, to attain the MPA, or even the DPA (Doctorate of Public Administration)?” This argument shows that public administration is a field currently in domination by practice. Raadschelders (1999) shows that there is no coherent framework and unified body of knowledge for public administration. Box (1992) finds that published research in public administration lacks a methodological rigor which is perceived as a lapse in the scholarly aspect of the discipline. Using different methodologies for research and teaching broad subjects, such as ethics and information technology, indicates the field of public administration is very diverse in preparing public managers to oversee the bureaucracy.

Training professionals for government service requires a mix of both theory and practice. The study of pragmatism has an influence upon public administration since it merges theory and practice. Shields (1998, 197) defines pragmatism as “the philosophy of common sense that uses purposeful human inquiry as a focal point.” Raadschelders (1999) argues that public affairs and administration needs its own identity from other social sciences by using government as the foundation to define the role of public affairs

and administration within this context. Raadschelders argument is abstract in showing the need to assign definitions to the theoretical concept of public affairs and administration. The political essence and discipline of government creates the theory versus practice debate in public administration. Society continues to evolve which constructs new challenges for government officials. The study of public administration must adapt to confront these problems. Political and economic conditions damper the existence of a solid theoretical framework for public administration. Mixing theory and practice in the context of public administration allows the practitioner to effectively confront a constantly changing political environment.

Understanding theoretical concepts in public affairs and administration is a skill that public officials should possess to manage an organization. The current political climate in America downplays the need for a theoretical basis in public administration. The reinventing government movement, beginning in the 1980s, attacks government institutions and public employees. Efficiency and less regulation are now ideas important to public managers. Spicer (2004, 359) asserts that reinventors want a unified government that is efficient rather than a “constitutionally divided form of government.” Reinventing government focuses more upon the practical aspects of running the government rather than upon the theoretical foundations upon which the nation’s bureaucracy bases its current evolution. According to Spicer (2004, 359-360):

If scholars and practitioners paid more attention to the history of ideas, they might be more aware of and sensitive to the problems and pitfalls that have beset the efforts of past political and administrative reformers. They might be less vulnerable to the superficial novelty of such ideas as ‘mission-driven’ government and more inclined to look at them circumspectly, weighing them more carefully against competing notions of governance.



Nonetheless, many public managers accept the ideas of the reinventing government movement while denouncing the rules and regulations in place to keep the bureaucracy accountable to the people.

## **NASPAA**

The National Association of Schools of Public Affairs and Administration (NASPAA) has a very short and important history. NASPAA came into being around 1970 when professors of public affairs and administration saw the need for an organization to accredit programs other than the ineffective Council on Graduate Education for Public Administration (Uveges 1987). NASPAA (2005) creates consistency in public affairs and administration by requiring standards to be met by member institutions to further advance the field of inquiry.

Member institutions of NASPAA voted to create a program of “voluntary peer review evaluation of master degree programs in public affairs and administration in 1977” (NASPAA 2005). The purpose of this program is to develop standards for master programs in public affairs and administration. Uveges (1987, 196) asserts that “members of the Standards Committee believed that the existing ‘laissez-faire’ approach to graduate education for the public service was no longer acceptable. Furthermore, they feared that if existing graduate programs did not provide direction and relevant substance for professional public service education some other accrediting-type organization might establish standards.” The Standards provide credibility to graduate degree programs in public affairs and administration.

NASPAA became the official accrediting organization for the MPA degree in 1986. Baldwin (1988, 876) notes that “a substantial element of the public administration

academic and practitioner community saw that [NASPAA recognized as the official accrediting organization] as a significant step to consolidate and legitimate the field and to enhance the quality of public administration education.” NASPAA currently applies nine standards to MPA programs to gain and keep accreditation status. These nine standards contain program eligibility for peer review, program mission, program jurisdiction, common core curriculum and specializations, faculty, admission of students, student services, support services and facilities, and off-campus and distance education programs (NASPAA 2005). These standards create rigorous programs in public affairs and administration education.

NASPAA membership has significantly increased since its inception in 1970 and the initiation of the peer review process in 1977. Two hundred and fifty-three institutions currently hold memberships within NASPAA by meeting their accreditation standards. Institutions serve different purposes in educating current and future public administrators and policymakers, but broad adherence to acceptable standards gives masters programs greater credibility. Presently, the Commission on Peer Review and Accreditation (COPRA) sends teams to campuses to investigate member programs’ compliance with NASPAA Accreditation Standards and make all final decisions regarding accreditation for programs (NASPAA 2005). Uveges (1987, 197) states “NASPAA believed the development of standards would reduce the wide diversity among MPA programs and would enlarge the recognition of the MPA as a professional degree.” NASPAA centralizes the accreditation of graduate programs in public affairs and administration. Graduate programs that receive accreditation by NASPAA create a more consistent

curriculum that undergoes a stringent review process by scholars in the field of public affairs and administration.

What are the benefits of gaining accreditation by NASPAA? Baldwin (1988) finds that NASPAA accredited programs are more effective than non-accredited programs. Uveges (1987) found in his study almost twenty years ago that the curriculum standards have the greatest impact upon MPA programs. Other standards such as faculty and admission standards show major differences for MPA programs in that major research institutions prescribe more competition among applicants and have larger faculties. Institutions are required to have at least five full-time faculty members and admit only qualified applicants with a strong potential for success (NASPAA 2005). The minimum standards create flexibility and diversity among MPA programs at institutions throughout the United States. Tummala (1991, 466) believes that it is “not always true that large programs are preferable to small programs.” Individual students should determine which program in public affairs or administration is preferable for their individual needs and abilities.

NASPAA Standards for Accreditation (2005) serve as the conceptual framework for this research project. The following information in this chapter describes the literature relating to the Standards for Accreditation and the importance of each component for effective public management.

### **Management of Public Service Organizations**

NASPAA (2005, 9) maintains “the common curriculum components shall enhance the student’s values, knowledge, and skills to act ethically and effectively.” The standards serve to create knowledgeable graduates competent in the field of public affairs

and administration. The *management of public service organizations* serves as part of the common curriculum standards for NASPAA accreditation which comprise the subject areas of *human resources, budgeting and financial processes, information management and technology applications, and policy*<sup>5</sup>. Sinclair (2005) finds in his study that these skills are very important for public managers to possess.

### **Human Resources**

*Human resources* deal with personnel issues relating to the public sector, an area of specialization that is vital to maintaining a professional workforce to serve the public good. Public managers must use *human resource* development strategies and tie them to a goal or an incentive in order to motivate employees (Daley and Vasu 2005). Public servants must be familiar with recruitment, employment examinations, selection, promotion, termination, employee evaluations, and various other aspects relating to personnel issues. Public managers are limited by political and fiscal constraints in hiring employees with the best credentials. Cayer (2004, 118) finds that “public employees’ performance is a key concern of governments because taxpayers demand high levels of service while attempting to hold down taxes.” The organizational environment creates enormous pressure upon public managers to create an environment to keep employees motivated to perform their duties.

All public administrators and MPA graduates must be proficient in regulation involving labor-management relations. Public employees can unionize in certain

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<sup>5</sup> Policy will be discussed in more detail in the Application of Qualitative and Quantitative Techniques section of this chapter.

situations, so *human resource* departments must understand the delicate balance between labor and management. Cayer (2004, 153) asserts that “the political nature of public sector bargaining also is reflected in the way management selects its representatives and decides on the policy it will bring to the bargaining table.” Citizens have a stake in labor unrest in the public sector, so the perception of actions of public managers must reflect professional values and compassion. Knowledge of *human resources* is vital for an effective public manager.

### **Budgeting and Financial Processes**

*Budgets* and funding are the lifeblood of public agencies. *Policy implementation* cannot effectively happen without employees who possess skills in *finance* and the negotiations necessary to obtain public funds. Page (1985, 73) argues “budgets are typically the product of a complex bargaining relationship within the executive [branch of government]. The process of budgeting is largely incremental, based upon the acceptance of the previous year’s budget as the basis for drawing up that of the following year.” Control of the *budget* is a political battle in which government bureaucrats are in the middle of the fight between legislators, city council members, and various other elected officials in all areas of government throughout the United States.

Practitioners and MPA graduates rank *budgeting and finance* skills as the most relevant skills that they receive in preparation for a career in public service (Grizzle 1985). City Managers currently regard *budgeting and financial processes* as the most important sub-category in the *management of public service organizations* category (Sinclair 2005). All NASPAA (2005) accredited programs require at least one course that deals with this subject area, although the course is not limited to only studying public

*finance and budgeting*. Public administrators must possess at least the basic skills in *budgeting* to properly compete in the job market. Brintnall (1998) finds that NASPAA Standards provide assurance that the fundamental *financial* management and *budgeting* skills are taught in member programs, but that there is a need to review and update the standards for *financial* management. Organizations such as the Government Financial Officers Association, National Certified Public Manager Consortium, and the Association of Government Accountants “have been actively developing criteria, training, and protocols” to certify public *financial* managers (Brintnall 1998, 3). Public officials must understand the basics of public *finance* to competently manage organizations.

The current antigovernment political climate places restraints upon public funding. Cayer (2004, 115) finds “fiscal constraints are facts of life for government at all levels. Tax revolts and other spending limitations became popular nationwide in the late 1970s and continue to the present, necessitating cutback management in government.” Public officials continue to run massive deficits at the federal level, while many state and local governments cannot produce debt in their operating *budget* due to constitutional and ordinance provisions (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001). Public managers at the state and local level must be proficient in balancing complex *budgets* in order to adhere to regulations and law. Heilbroner and Thurow maintain that the federal government can safely run a deficit. As they state, “the reason that governments can safely run a deficit is that the regular income of the public sector comes from taxes, and taxes reflect the general income of the country. Thus, most of the money that the government lays out enters the general stream of GDP (Gross Domestic Product), where it is largely available

to recapture by taxation” (1998, 109). The federal government can maintain a deficit, but prudent *financial* controls and spending are vital for every high-level public official.

### **Information Management and Technology Applications**

Public managers and their staffs must be competent in *information management and technology applications*, a vital skill, in order to maintain an efficient work environment in the public sector to serve the public good. City Managers do not currently place a heavy emphasis on the importance of *information management and technology applications* skills in running municipalities (Sinclair 2005). *Information management and technology applications* may not be the most important area to possess knowledge in the subject, but the roles of computers in government are transforming the roles of public officials. All public employees should possess basic skills in computers. Kraemer and Northrop (1989) recommend that MPA students should take a course in computer applications for management decisions. NASPAA currently places a heavy emphasis on the teaching of *information technology* in accredited programs (2005). Students also should be familiar with *policy* and *ethical* considerations that regard the use of computers and *information technology* in the public sector. Many MPA programs currently offer specializations in government *information systems and technology*.

MPA programs will continue to adapt to the environment of *information management and technology applications* as technological innovations continue to occur in this subset of public administration. In teaching computer skills, Kraemer and Northrop (1989, 450) argue “the point here is not that MPA programs need to teach basic, easy computing skills, but rather that MPA programs should train their students to think and act in the real public sector environment which presumes computerization; therefore,

basic computing skills should be part of MPA programs.” The public sector is changing to catch up with the software programs that are common in the private sector. A public sector workforce must be knowledgeable of *information management and technology applications* in order to properly implement computer networks and software.

### **Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis**

What is the difference between *quantitative and qualitative* data? Babbie (2004, 26) argues “the distinction between quantitative and qualitative data in social research is essentially the distinction between numerical and nonnumerical data.” Everything can fall into the category of *qualitative* data, but *quantitative* data can quantify into measurable variables. NASPAA (2005) Standards for Accreditation require programs to teach subject matters relating to *policy and program formulation, implementation and evaluation, decision-making, and problem solving*. Aristigueta and Raffel (2001) find that *quantitative techniques* and *policy analysis* are the most frequently taught courses in MPA programs. These subjects comprise the broad sub-categories of the *application of quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis*.

### **Policy and Program Formulation**

Public *policy* focuses upon the *decision-making* aspects of government institutions (Elmore 1986). All public administrators must understand which *policy* affects their organization. The *formulation of policy* is a complex process which includes many actors. Public managers are accountable to many government officials in creating and *implementing policy*. Elmore (1986, 74) states “government agencies have evolved from small, single-function operations with relatively simple unitary structures and direct lines of political control into large, multi-division agencies with multiple channels of



accountability.” *Policy* decisions and relationships with those affected by certain *policy* is knowledge that every public official should possess.

*Policy and program formulation* occurs at every level of government. Public managers must oversee the *policy and program formulation* process in order to effectively create *policy* for the *implementation* process. *Policy and program formulation* is an important skill for public managers to possess (Sinclair 2005). Employees with specific knowledge of certain policies are needed in the public sector. The *policy and program formulation* process represents the initial phase in the delivery of government programs to the citizenry.

Kingdon (1984, 3) defines public *policymaking* as “a set of processes which include: (1) setting the agenda; (2) specifying alternatives for the agenda; (3) an authoritative choosing among the alternatives, expressed through legislative enactment or executive decision; and (4) implementing the decision of the law.” Executives and managers in the public sector must possess this knowledge in order to be successful in the *policy* process.

Government employees and analysts run the *policy* process. When operating from the confines of an office environment in one geographical region, it is difficult to gain a perspective of the needs of certain groups or individuals that can be affected by *policy* changes. DeLeon (1992) argues that public *policy* analysts must be in touch with the citizens they serve in order to provide services through *policy formulation and implementation*. *Policy formulation and implementation* can have a major impact in the delivery of services to the citizenry that demand efficiency in government. Assessing the

criteria that will be required to implement the *policy* in the future is a necessary skill that all public managers and analysts must possess.

There is a belief in American politics that politicians run the entire process of *policy formulation*. This perception is true for major *policy* initiatives that garner massive amounts of attention from the public. Politicians understand they are accountable for the success or failure of the *policy and programs* when they gain the public's eye. But, elected officials are not bureaucratic professionals that specialize in certain *policy* areas. Spence (1997) provides data that suggest agencies act on their own when *policy formulation* is delegated to them by politicians. Public managers must be able to effectively *formulate policy* on their own, and understand the possible consequences that can occur in the *implementation and evaluation* stages of *policy and programs*.

Interest groups and lobbying have a major stake in *policy* at every level of government. Corruption and poor *policy* decisions can have a major impact upon the welfare of society. Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle (2001, 34) ascertain that "special organized interests are always busy trying to influence what government institutions do. As citizens, we have to decide if these groups are merely presenting their point of view to public authorities or if they are instead corrupting the process of self-government." *Policy* affects people in society. Public administrators must understand the process of *policy formulation* and present their analysis with objectivity and professionalism.

### **Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation**

*Implementing and evaluating policy and programs* can strengthen or destroy a public manager's career. Public officials should understand that *policy and program*

*implementation* is part of the stage of public *policymaking*, which can create an environment of uncertainty. Polivka and Stryker (1983, 255) argue that public administrators will need to provide elected officials with justification for decisions using “objective, rational criteria drawn from data-oriented policy analyses and program evaluations.” The use of *qualitative* and *quantitative* data in *policy and program implementation and evaluation* will increase the likelihood of its success.

The citizenry plays a major part in the *policy and program implementation and evaluation stages*. Schneider and Jacoby (1996) find that interest groups, structural characteristics of governments, and environmental conditions affect *policy* at the state level, while political ideology and partisan politics has little direct impact. Further, the current reinventing government movement in America wants quick and efficient *policy implementation*. Box (1999) argues that the reinventing government philosophy prevents *policy* analysts from creating substantive analysis in the *evaluation of policy and programs*. The public manager must be aware of the political pressures involved in the *policy and program implementation and evaluation stages*.

### **Decision-making**

*Decision-making* in the public sector includes *qualitative* and *quantitative analysis*. Case studies and past experience can lead a manager to make important *decisions*. Statistics and data analysis prescribe more accuracy and assurance in making *decisions* that affect *policy* and regulation in the public sector. Spicer (2001) finds that modern writers or scholars focus on analytical techniques for *policy analysis*. Public affairs and administration education focuses upon training public servants to properly analyze issues and *policy* in order to make difficult *decisions* in the context of a *political*

*environment*. Elmore (1986, 70) quotes “public policy programs make no pretense of training ‘well-rounded’ public servants; they train people with an analytic frame of mind. The *policy* programs emphasize *problem-solving* exercises as a method of instruction, rather than the traditional lecture or seminar.” *Decision-making* based on the use of *qualitative and quantitative* data is the proper way to train public servants.

### **Problem Solving**

The ability to solve *problems* stems from *decision-making* skills. Roberts and Pavlak (2002) define MPA core competencies as consisting of communication, analytical, *information management*, *financial* management, performance management, management of change, *decision-making*, and group interaction skills. NASPAA accreditation standards prescribe these skills through their core curriculum requirements. Jennings (1989) wants *decision-making* skills to equip public managers to make competent *decisions* in the realm of public service. In order for *policy* to come into being and undergo successful *implementation*, public managers must have competencies in *qualitative and quantitative techniques of analysis*. The ability to *solve problems* results from precise analysis of the information at hand. *Problem-solving* skills are the most important sub-category for public managers to possess in the category of the *application of quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis* (Sinclair 2005).

In order to teach *qualitative and quantitative techniques*, many graduate programs in public affairs and administration require their students to partake in a capstone course. This requires significant research and analysis regarding a *policy* topic. Durant (2002) argues for capstone courses to implement organizational and interorganizational dynamics along with *policy* and management *decision* analysis. Different graduate

programs serve different students with diverse needs and abilities, so the teaching of *quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis* will vary to meet specific goals of the program at each individual institution. If public managers possess theoretical and practical concepts relating to *decision-making*, then the *problem-solving* process in the public sector will become easier and more attainable.

### **Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment**

This subset of NASPAA core curriculum requirements is very broad and open to interpretation. The sub-categories consist of *political and legal institutions and processes*, *economic and social institutions and processes*, and *organization and management concepts and behavior*. *Political and legal institutions and processes* involve all branches of government and the regulations and laws that the bureaucracy imposes upon the citizenry. *Economic and social institutions and processes* affect the economic prosperity of a region and the social services that are delivered to meet the needs of the general public. *Organization and management concepts* deal with how public officials effectively manage their organization.

### **Political and Legal Institutions and Processes**

*Political and legal institutions* refer to the actors that create and implement laws and policies in society along with the various power plays and processes that accompany government functions. Public managers must understand this basic structure and know the role of their organization in society and their own role within the organization. The political environment is an arena in which public bureaucrats must constantly *bargain and negotiate* in order to obtain funds and pass legislation to enact *policy*. Public managers must constantly be aware of the *legal processes* that apply to their agency or

municipality in order to avoid lawsuits. Bureaucrats, politicians, and the general citizenry must be separate and free of improper influence in order for *political and legal institutions and processes* to properly function and exist (Kettl 2002).

The *political and legal institutions and processes* serve a purpose in a democracy to maintain the public trust by effectively delivering services to the citizenry and maintaining order and the rule of law. Breaux, Clynch, and Morris (2003, 259) assert that MPA programs must debate “how much emphasis the core curriculum [should] place on the interaction of public administrators within the political, economic, and social environment, and how much curriculum content [should be devoted to] professional management and analytical techniques.” Public managers need foundations in the *understanding of public policy and of the organizational environment* of public affairs and administration.

### **Economic and Social Institutions and Processes**

*Economic and social institutions and processes* are major frameworks of society. *Economic institutions* include state agencies such as the Texas Legislative Budget Board and the Comptroller of Public Accounts. *Economic processes* can include interest rates, economic development, taxation, and the budgetary process (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001). *Social institutions* include state agencies such as Texas Health and Human Services and the Texas Education Agency. *Social processes* can include regulation and financing of education, poverty and welfare, and the environment (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001).

The federal government is a sector that can print money, tax the citizenry, develop a budget surplus or deficit, and incur debt (Heilbroner and Thurow 1998). Every public

manager must understand the role of *economic institutions and processes* in society and how the concepts relate to their organization. Public officials at the state and local level must understand the role of their agency or municipality regarding economic regulations.

*Social institutions* impact the quality of life in society (Sinclair 2005). Public managers must understand what types of social legislation are passed in the legislative branch of government and how specific agencies must *implement and evaluate* this *policy*. The bureaucracy spends massive amounts of its budget on health and education (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001) in order to create a well-educated and healthy citizenry. But, one of the interesting aspects of *social institutions* is their impact from working in cooperation, or sometimes in conflict, with community and non-profit organizations and leaders. Warren (2001, 22) states “the foundation for people’s development as members of society and as democratic citizens lies in local communities. It is the institutions of local community life, schools, churches, and less formal interactions that integrate people into democratic society.” Public managers must be aware of the massive role that *social institutions and processes* play in America.

### **Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior**

Public officials must effectively manage their organization. Sinclair (2005) finds that knowledge of *organization and management concepts and behavior* is the most important sub-category for public managers to possess in the category of the *understanding of the public policy and organizational environment*. NASPAA is influencing a shift towards *policy* programs striking a balance between teaching techniques of analysis and managerial skills. Elmore (1986, 70) finds “analysis and economic theory are still the hallmarks of public policy programs. But in the past five or

six years a number of programs have begun a discernible shift toward more explicit preparation of students for managerial roles in the public sector.” Public affairs and administration students must have extensive knowledge of *organizational and management concepts* in order to effectively manage public organizations.

Theoretical frameworks must comprise a student’s understanding of the *organizational environment*. Neumann (1996, 412) believes that students must understand “the nature of a public organization, [how] is the public organization related to its environment, and [what does it mean] to manage or to administer the public organizations.” Kirlin (1996, 417) ascertains that “the big questions of public administration in a democracy must satisfy [four criteria]: (a) achieving a democratic polity; (b) rising to the societal level, even in terms of values also important at the level of individual public organizations; (c) confronting the complexity of instruments of collective action; and (d) encouraging more effective societal learning.” If graduate programs in public affairs and administration introduce these concepts to current and future public administrators and policymakers, then the workplace of public service will be a more professional and efficient environment.

### **Administrative Ethics**

Public managers must be aware of *ethical dilemmas* and understand how to *apply ethics* codes and regulations to their organizations and subordinates. The American Society for Public Administration (ASPA) provides an *ethics* code for all of its members to follow. The ASPA code (2005) states all public administrators must serve the public interest, respect the constitution and the law, demonstrate personal integrity, promote *ethical* organizations, and strive for professional *ethics*. These five guidelines are not



enforceable and are very broad. *Ethics* enforcement is complicated due to the ambiguity of many *ethics* codes and the deliberations of what is truly right and wrong. Public managers must be competent in handling possible *ethics* violations with their employees.

### **Ethical Dilemmas**

Public administrators must constantly be aware of *ethics* in their daily activities. Serving the public good is a must for effective public management. *Ethical dilemmas* confront public administrators on a routine basis. Bowman and Williams (1997, 522) show that “ethical dilemmas in management are pervasive; both in the appearance and reality they are a part of being a public servant.” The very nature of our political system creates the possibility of public officials being open to corruption. Simon and Eitzen (1990, 209) state corruption in government can be defined as “any illegal or unethical use of governmental authority for personal or political gain.” The public sector must take a hard stance in dealing with *ethical* violations and corruption in order to be truly accountable to the people.

Public sector *ethics* have become a high priority in many countries throughout the globe. Recent scandals in the last quarter of the 20<sup>th</sup> century up to the present day have made the public more aware of the need for *ethics* in government. An international focus upon *ethics* in government is a response to a decline in the public confidence in government (Maguire 1998). Gilman and Lewis (1996, 517) state “professional public administration must remain intellectually open to global dialogue on shared values, norms, and structures.” Cleary (1990) finds in his study that the subject matter of *ethics* needs more national attention in public affairs and administration education. NASPAA currently does not require member programs to teach a class on *ethics* in government.

Cleary's study is surprising, because Menzel (1997) finds that programs that teach *ethics* in their core curricula are having a positive impact on the profession of public administration. The ability to understand and handle *ethical dilemmas* in the public sector workforce is a skill that every administrator should possess.

### **Application of Ethics**

Public managers must understand how to *apply ethics* and possess *ethical* values in the workplace (Sinclair 2005). Many public institutions and organizations have a certain culture that is not open to new regulations and change. City Managers currently rank the *application of ethics* as a very important skill to possess (Sinclair 2005). Managers must be aware of certain attitudes of employees regarding *ethics* and create new ways to change their way of looking at their place in the organization regarding rules and *ethics* codes. Public organizations must use assessment strategies to create change if they are to successfully *apply ethics* codes (Van Wart 1995).

An *ethics* code is a common way to create an *ethical* organization. Bowman and Williams (1997, 521) find that "codes are seen as important and are the most valuable way to promote ethics, but may not necessarily be conducive to exemplary behavior." Many public managers believe their own values and beliefs suffice for *handling ethics* in their organization. Sinclair (2005) finds that subjectively *applying ethics* to organizations is a serious *ethical* violation. Public officials objectively must *apply ethics* codes in order to create an *ethical* organization.

### **Skill Set**

Public managers must be competent in *writing, public speaking, and bargaining* and *negotiating*. These areas comprise the *skill set* area of this research. NASPAA (2005)

Standards for Accreditation state that, “curriculum components are designed to produce professionals capable of intelligent, creative analysis and communication, and action in public service.” *Writing policy* statements and reports, *speaking* effectively to audiences, and *bargaining and negotiating* methods are some of the most important skills for effective public managers to possess (Mitchell 1991). Public managers must possess the ability to effectively communicate in order to survive in the public sector.

### **Writing**

*Writing* is a basic skill that most people possess. But *writing* in the public sector can impact how successful a *policy* will be formulated or how a manager can convey messages to subordinates using email or memos. Sinclair (2005) finds through survey research that 95% of City Managers regard *writing* skills in the public sector as a very important ability to possess. Politicians, the media, and citizens routinely request letters from public managers regarding certain issues. *Writing* and technical skills are necessary in government. Workers will have to be more competent in *problem-solving* and communication skills, which many students today do not possess (Duncan 1996). Public administrators must possess excellent *writing* skills, and graduate programs in public affairs and administration must do more to address the need for successful *writers* in the public sector.

### **Public Speaking**

*Public speaking* is required of all high-level public officials during certain times in their career. Sinclair (2005, 45) states that a manager “must be capable and prepared to clearly communicate ideas, facts, and current matters.” *Speaking* before public audiences, the media, interest groups, politicians, other bureaucrats, and subordinates will confront a

public manager. Denhardt (2001, 529) states that “administrators not only need to know about communications, they need to be able to communicate.” The ability to be comfortable before large crowds and verbally get your message across with confidence is a necessary skill to possess in the world of public life.

Certain forces will always be acting upon a public organization to ascertain information and expose certain *policy and programs* for their merits. Dealing with external stakeholders through communication and *public speaking* is an important skill for public administrators (Durant 2002). The productivity and goals of an organization can rest upon the communication skills of upper-level managers. Successful managers can verbalize their ideas so that they are heard, understood, and acted upon by their subordinates (Fletcher 1983). Public managers must possess skill in *public speaking*.

### **Bargaining and Negotiation**

Public managers always will be involved in the process of *bargaining and negotiating*. People *bargain and negotiate* in almost every aspect of their life. Ury (1993, 4) states that “negotiation is the process of back-and-forth communication aimed at reaching agreement with others when some of your interests are shared and some are opposed.” Simply put, “negotiation is the informal activity you engage in whenever you try to get something you want from another person” (Ury 1993, 4).

Contract *bargaining and negotiation* is an area with which all public administrators should at least gain familiarity. Bidding out jobs to the private sector is a process to allow government to limit their role and allow companies to compete for service delivery (Wistrich 1998). Government contracts represent lucrative offers for

private companies, which can lead to misappropriations of public funds, corruption, and poor service delivery.

Public officials must be competent in dealing with private sector companies and putting in *writing* the work to be accomplished in a timely manner. Prager (1994, 176) states that “the public sector often pays inadequate attention to the costs of managing contracts out and monitoring compliance.” Poor monitoring is a result of a lack of knowledge on the part of the public official charged with contract management and compliance. Political constraints and lack of funding can impede the public manager’s ability to properly *bargain and negotiate* with private contractors. Cooper (1980, 459) states that “the major tasks of the contracting officials may be to balance political supports and demands in light of government needs and available resources rather than the frequently repeated goal of acquisition of the best goods and services at the lowest possible price.” *Bargaining and negotiating* is a common occurrence in the public sector, which requires skilled and knowledgeable employees to oversee certain matters.

### **Conceptual Framework**

Conceptual frameworks “guide data collection and interpretation at the most practical, mechanical, elements of empirical inquiry” (Shields and Tajalli 2005, 5). The research for this project is organized and described with the conceptual framework (Shields 1998). The purpose of this research is descriptive. The research describes the NASPAA Standards for Accreditation along with the categories of administrative *ethics* and *skill set* which have been tied to the literature. The conceptual framework used is descriptive categories.

**Table 2.1: Conceptual Framework**

<b>Descriptive Categories</b>	<b>Literature Sources</b>
<p><b>Management of Public Service Organizations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Human Resources</li> <li>○ Budgeting and Financial Processes</li> <li>○ Information Management and Technology Applications</li> <li>○ Policy</li> </ul>	<p>NASPAA 2005, Grizzle 1985            Sinclair 2005, Cayer 2004            Daley and Vasu 2005            Page 1985, Elmore 1986            Heilbroner and Thurow 1998            Kraemer and Northrop, Brintnall 1998            Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001</p>
<p><b>Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Policy and Program Formulation</li> <li>○ Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation</li> <li>○ Decision-making</li> <li>○ Problem-solving</li> </ul>	<p>Babbie 2004, Kingdon 1984, Box 1999            Aristigueta and Raffel 2001, DeLeon 1992            Polivka and Stryker 1983, Spence 1997            Schneider and Jacoby 1996, Spicer 2001            Roberts and Pavlak 2002, Elmore 1986            NASPAA 2005, Jennings 1989            Sinclair 2005, Durant 2002</p>
<p><b>Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Political and Legal Institutions and Processes</li> <li>○ Economic and Social Institutions and Processes</li> <li>○ Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior</li> </ul>	<p>Breaux, Clynch, and Morris 2003            Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001            Heilbroner and Thurow 1998            Sinclair 2005, Kettl 2002            Warren 2001, Spicer 2001            Elmore 1986            Neumann 1996            Kirlin 1996</p>
<p><b>Administrative Ethics</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Ethical dilemmas</li> <li>○ Application of Ethics</li> </ul>	<p>ASPA 2005, Bowman and Williams 1997,            Simon and Eitzen 1990, Maguire 1998,            Gilman and Lewis 1996, Cleary 1990,            Menzel 1997, Sinclair 2005, Van Wart 1995</p>
<p><b>Skill Set</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Writing</li> <li>○ Public Speaking</li> <li>○ Bargaining and Negotiating</li> </ul>	<p>NASPAA 2005, Mitchell 1991, Duncan 1996, Denhardt 2001, Durant 2002, Fletcher 1983, Uri 1993, Wistrich 1998, Prager 1994, Cooper 1980</p>

The Categories of Management of Public Service Organizations, Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis, and Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment represent the 2005 NASPAA Standards for Accreditation Common Curriculum Requirements.

The Categories of Administrative Ethics and Skill Set are taken from Brad Sinclair’s Fall 2005 Applied Research Project at Texas State University.

## **Chapter Summary**

NASPAA Standards for Accreditation, along with the categories of *administrative ethics* and *skill set*, have been discussed as to their importance to effective public management. An introduction to public affairs and administration education, the MPA degree, the current debate on theory versus practice, and the history and role of NASPAA were intended to familiarize the reader with information about the discipline of public affairs and administration. The categories described in this chapter are the basis for this research. The next chapter will discuss the methodology used for this research.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **Chapter Purpose**

This chapter combines the literature with the research project. The research technique, the unit of analysis, population, and the statistics are described. The descriptive categories from the conceptual framework in Chapter 2 are operationalized. **Table 3.1** describes how the descriptive categories are operationalized to create survey questions to measure the responses of Executive Directors in the state of Texas.

Each sub-category from the conceptual framework was measured through a set of questions. Additional questions regarding the importance of each category are also included in the survey. Further, respondents were asked an open-ended question to list the top three skills necessary to possess for effective public management. The question was meant to reinforce the credibility of the curriculum taught in graduate programs of public affairs and administration. The responses revealed other knowledge, skills, and abilities that are not mentioned in the conceptual framework of this project. Demographic information also was asked of the respondents to determine the current characteristics of Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas.

### **Research Technique**

Survey research is the instrument used for this paper. Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas were surveyed to determine the level of importance they place upon certain knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for effective public management using the NASPAA Standards for Accreditation. There are several strengths associated with survey research. Babbie (2004, 274) finds that “surveys are particularly useful in describing the characteristics of a large population by making large samples feasible.”



Since Executive Directors are high-level public officials spread out through many state agencies, surveying is the easiest way to assess their perspectives on issues.

The questionnaire for this research is taken from Brad Sinclair's 2005 Applied Research Project. Questionnaires are useful when "the researcher is interested in determining the extent to which respondents hold a particular attitude or perspective" (Babbie 2004, 245). This project is an attempt to compare Executive Directors' responses with the responses of City Managers from Sinclair's study. Therefore, no pre-test is required of the survey questions that have been previously used in research where the responses were found to be valid and reliable based on analyzing Sinclair's results. **Appendix A** provides the survey instrument. The questionnaire uses the Likert scale (Babbie 2004), which is given in **Table 3.1**, to analyze the respondents' perceptions regarding the importance of every sub-category question. The surveys were sent via email through the online survey instrument Surveymonkey.<sup>6</sup>

### **Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis for this research is Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas. Executive Directors are the "appointed chief administrators that handle the agencies' day-to-day responsibilities, including the budget, personnel, and the administration of state laws and those federal laws that are carried out through state governments" (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle 2001, 142). Executive Directors serve at the pleasure of a board or commission of their state agency and are not directly accountable to one chief executive in the State of Texas (Kraemer, Newell, and Prindle

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<sup>6</sup> Surveymonkey can be accessed at their companies' website: [www.surveymonkey.com](http://www.surveymonkey.com)

2001). This responsibility makes Executive Directors excellent candidates to assess which knowledge, skills, and abilities are necessary for effective public management in Texas State Government.

### **Population**

The population for this research is Executive Directors of state agencies in the State of Texas. The Capitol Complex Phone Directory<sup>7</sup> maintains that there are currently sixty-six Executives Directors in Texas with applicable contact information. One problem that confronts this research is that Executive Directors regularly resign or move on from their organizations. The population of Executive Directors in Texas is only as accurate as information currently provided by the Capitol Complex Phone Directory. This population frame is a manageable number for the purpose of this research.

### **Statistics**

The descriptive statistics of mode and percentages are used to assess the survey results. The mode and percentage of each sub-category is used to demonstrate which knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important for effective public management. The use of statistics gives the reader a broader understanding of the perspectives of Executive Directors in the state of Texas.

### **Anonymity of Respondents**

This Applied Research Project has been approved by the Institutional Review Board at Texas State University-San Marcos. The researcher has undergone training on the ethics involved in research on human subjects. No harm was done to any research

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<sup>7</sup> The Capitol Complex Phone Directory can be found at the following website: [www.dir.state.tx.us/ccts/directory/](http://www.dir.state.tx.us/ccts/directory/)

subject during this project. Respondent identities remain anonymous, and they are instructed before they partake in the survey research that it is voluntary and their participation can end at any time. The reference number for approval is 05-0425.

**Table 3.1: Operationalization of the Conceptual Framework**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Subcategory</b>	<b>Question</b>
<b>Management of Public Service Organizations</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Human Resources</li> <li>2. Budgeting and Financial Processes</li> <li>3. Information Management and Technology Applications</li> <li>4. Policy</li> </ol>	As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of _____ in your role?
<b>Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Policy and Program Formulation</li> <li>2. Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation</li> <li>3. Decision-making</li> <li>4. Problem Solving</li> </ol>	As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of _____ in your role?
<b>Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Political and Legal Institutions and Processes</li> <li>2. Economic and Social Institutions and Processes</li> <li>3. Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior</li> </ol>	As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of _____ in your role?
<b>Administrative Ethics</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Ethical Dilemmas</li> <li>2. Application of Ethics</li> </ol>	As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to _____ in your role?
<b>Skill Set</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Writing</li> <li>2. Public Speaking</li> <li>3. Bargaining and Negotiating</li> </ol>	As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of _____ in your role?

All survey questions use the Likert scale and are identical in format for every category. SCALE: 5 – Very Important 4 – Fairly Important 3 – Moderate Importance 2 – Seldom Important 1 – Little or No Importance

## **Chapter Summary**

Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas were surveyed to determine which knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important for effective public management. The conceptual framework was the basis for the project and led to the survey construction. The following chapter analyzes the data collected and provides the results of the survey responses.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Chapter Purpose

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze the data collected from the survey sent to Executive Directors in the state of Texas. The data are classified into descriptive categories to determine which knowledge, skills, and abilities are the most important for effective public management using the common curriculum components for NASPAA Standards for Accreditation. The results are compared with Brad Sinclair's findings from his 2005 Applied Research Project on City Manager perceptions. Demographic information on the respondents also was provided.

### Description of Returned Surveys

The Capitol Complex Directory lists sixty-six Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas with applicable contact information. Sixty-one agency Executive Directors were sent emails.<sup>8</sup> Thirty-three responses were received during a two week time period from March 1 through March 15, 2006, with one reminder sent out. The responses generated a response rate of 54%. Babbie (2004) finds that since the response rate is over 50%, there is less chance for bias to exist in the survey results. The results showed a significantly high response rate. **Tables 4.1** through **4.5** provide modes and percentages from the survey results and rank which is the most important knowledge, skill, or ability to possess from each category according to Executive Directors. City Manager responses are compared with the responses of Executive Directors.

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<sup>8</sup> Email Addresses for Executive Directors of the Legislative Council, Board of Nurse Examiners, Texas Residential Construction Commission, State Board for Educator Certification, and the State Commission on Judicial Conduct were invalid or could not be found.

## **Respondent Characteristics**

Of the Executive Directors surveyed, the demographic information reveals a highly educated workforce that is dominated by males and middle-aged individuals. Executive Directors possess diverse master level or graduate degrees in a variety of subjects. Almost a majority of respondents have worked for their current state agency in their position as Executive Director for zero to three years. **Appendix B** lists the respondent characteristics.

## **Management of Public Service Organizations**

Public officials must have a broad understanding of management to properly oversee their organization. **Table 4.1** summarizes Sinclair's results from City Managers responses and the results of this study on Executive Directors. Descriptive statistics were used, and each sub-category was given a percentage ranking of importance along with the mode of responses.

The table shows that City Managers and Executive Directors place a high level of importance on all sub-categories of *management of public service organizations*. There is a high level of importance placed upon *policy, budgeting and financial processes*, and *human resources*. Executive Directors perceive *policy* as important with a 100 percent ranking as a fairly to very important knowledge area to possess. Following *policy* is knowledge of *budgeting and financial processes* (94 percent) which is followed by *human resources* at 88 percent.

Responses from City Managers and Executive Directors show that the knowledge of *information management and technology applications* is the least important sub-category of *management of public service organizations*. Eighty-two percent of

Executive Directors perceive knowledge of *information management and technology applications* as a fairly to very important knowledge area to possess, while 68 percent of City Managers perceive this area as a fairly to very important area to possess. Sinclair (2005) believes that city and employee size may be a reason for the ranking of *information management and technology applications*. It could also be argued that state agency missions and size may affect Executive Directors' lack of emphasis on the knowledge of *information management and technology applications*.

Most public and private organizations have centralized information technology departments to handle computer networks to improve the productivity of the organization (Turban, Leidner, McLean, and Wetherbe 2006). Specialized information technology departments allow managers to hire professionals to handle computer and technology related matters. Relying on these skilled professionals in state agencies could be a reason Executive Directors perceive the knowledge of *information management and technology applications* as the least important area to possess in the *management of public service organizations*.

Executive Directors perceive knowledge of *policy* as the most important to possess; while City Managers view knowledge of *budgeting and financial processes* as the most important to possess from the category of *management of public service organizations*. The results indicate a major discrepancy between the roles of state agencies and local governments in how they implement *policy* and oversee the budgeting process. Sinclair (2005, 60) finds "The high number for budgeting and finance could be the result of city managers perceiving budget preparation as their number one priority." City Managers have direct, personal, and frequent access to their city council to request

funds and develop *budgets*. Having to rely upon the Legislature, which only meets once every two years, for funds in a political and impersonal environment may be a reason Executive Directors do not perceive the knowledge area of *budgeting and financial processes* as the most important to possess in managing state agencies.

**Table 4.1: City Manager and Executive Director Value Perceptions of Management of Public Service Organizations**

Survey Questions As a current City Manager/Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of:	N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important	
<b>Human Resources*</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	96%	Very Important	7%
	<b>ED</b>	33	88%	Very Important	16%
<b>Budgeting and Financial Processes**</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	100%	Very Important	72%
	<b>ED</b>	33	94%	Very Important	28%
<b>Information Management*** and Technology Applications</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	68%	Fairly Important	0%
	<b>ED</b>	33	82%	Fairly Important	3%
<b>Policy</b>	<b>CM</b>	80	99%	Very Important	21%
	<b>ED</b>	33	100%	Very Important	53%

\*27% of City Managers selected “Fairly Important” while 36% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important” and 12% selected “Moderate Importance”

\*\*21% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important”

\*\*\*31% of City Managers selected “Moderate Importance” and 48% selected “Fairly Important” while 42% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important” and 18% selected “Moderate Importance” CM=City Manager ED=Executive Director

### **Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis**

City Managers make informed decisions to solve problems in society. **Table 4.2** analyzes the responses of City Managers in this field of inquiry and compares the results from Executive Directors’ perceptions.



In comparing the response percentages and modes of City Managers and Executive Directors, very little differences exist in this category. *Decision-making* scores the highest percentage of fairly to very important by Executive Directors at 100 percent. *Decision-making* is followed by *problem solving* and *policy and program formulation* at 97 percent, and *policy and program implementation and evaluation* receives the least at 91 percent. Possessing strong abilities in *quantitative and qualitative techniques of analysis* is necessary for effective public management.

The ranking of most important sub-category is the same order for City Managers and Executive Directors. *Decision-making* is the most important ability to possess, scoring 50 percent from Executive Directors and 42 percent from City Managers in their ranking. Thirty-five percent of City Managers rank *problem solving* as the second most important ability to possess, while 31 percent of Executive Directors rank this as the second most important skill to possess. The ability to *implement and evaluate policy and programs* follows for both populations of respondents with 21 percent of City Managers perceiving the ability as a fairly to very important knowledge to possess compared to the perception of 16 percent of Executive Directors. The ability to *formulate policy and programs* is ranked least with only 3 percent of both populations perceiving it as the most important ability to possess. Sinclair (2005) finds that the low ranking of *policy and program formulation* results from the perception that boards, elected officials, and city councils formulate *policy* rather than City Managers. These similarities show that state and local governments operate in similar fashion in dealing with *policy and program* issues. Possessing the means to make *decisions* and solve *problems* is necessary for effective public management.

**Table 4.2: City Manager and Executive Director Value Perceptions of Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis**

Survey Questions As a current City Manager/Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of:		N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
<b>Policy and Program Formulation*</b>	<b>CM</b>	80	97%	Very Important	3%
	<b>ED</b>	32	97%	Very Important	3%
<b>Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation**</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	97%	Very Important	21%
	<b>ED</b>	32	91%	Very Important	16%
<b>Decision-making</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	100%	Very Important	35%
	<b>ED</b>	31	100%	Very Important	50%
<b>Problem Solving</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	100%	Very Important	42%
	<b>ED</b>	32	97%	Very Important	31%

\*24% of City Manager’s selected “Fairly Important” while 34% of Executive Director’s selected “Fairly Important”

\*\*31% of Executive Director’s selected “Fairly Important”

**Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment**

Sinclair (2005, 62) states that knowledge of the *public policy and organizational environment* requires a public official “to embrace actors and employees while understanding the internal and external forces impacting government and management.” Executives at every level of government must understand the institutions, processes, concepts, and behaviors that affect their role as managers. **Table 4.3** describes the results from City Manager and Executive Director perceptions on the sub-categories of *understanding of the public policy and organizational environment*.

The sub-categories of *understanding of the public policy and organizational*

*environment* create very unique response rates. Seventy-one percent of City Managers perceive the sub-category of *economic and social processes* as fairly to very important with a mode of fairly important. The perceptions are drastically greater than the low response rate of 47 percent of Executive Directors perceiving this sub-category as a fairly to very important knowledge area to possess with a mode of moderate importance. The results indicate either a misunderstanding of this broad sub-topic or a lack of a practical use of this knowledge area as a public manager.

The percentage of responses for *political and legal institutions and processes* is almost identical for both City Managers (89 percent) and Executive Directors (91 percent). Eighty-six percent of City Managers perceive *organization and management concepts and behavior* as fairly to very important, while 78 percent of Executive Directors perceive this sub-category as fairly to very important. Both of these sub-categories are perceived as a very important ability to possess.

City Managers rank *organization and management concepts and behavior* as the most important knowledge area to possess. Executive Directors rank *political and legal institutions and processes* as the most important knowledge area to possess. City Managers are the chief executives of their specific city with a mission to provide services to all citizens in their jurisdiction. Sinclair (2005, 64) states “City managers are CEO’s of a city, responsible for managing subordinates and upper-level department heads.” Their responsibility could possibly correlate with the high ranking of the knowledge of *organization and management concepts and behavior*. Executive Directors have specific agency missions and deal with the Legislature on a regular basis. The responsibilities of managing a state agency with a specific mission, along with many Executive Directors

possessing a law degree, are probably reasons for their high ranking of knowledge of *political and legal institutions and processes*.

**Table 4.3: City Manager and Executive Director Value Perceptions of Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment**

Survey Questions As a current City Manager/Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of:		N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
<b>Political and Legal Institutions and Processes*</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	89%	Very Important	33%
	<b>ED</b>	32	91%	Very Important	55%
<b>Economic and Social Institutions and Processes**</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	71%	Fairly Important	3%
	<b>ED</b>	32	47%	Moderate Importance	3%
<b>Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior***</b>	<b>CM</b>	80	86%	Very Important	65%
	<b>ED</b>	32	78%	Very Important	42%

\*11% of City Managers selected “Moderate Importance” and 35% selected “Fairly Important” while 28% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important”

\*\*26% of City Managers selected “Moderate Importance” and 46% selected “Fairly Important” while 44% of Executive Directors selected “Moderate Importance” and 9% selected “Seldom Important”

\*\*\*13% of City Managers selected “Moderate Importance” and 36% selected “Fairly Important” while 38% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important” and 22% selected “Moderate Importance”

### **Administrative Ethics**

High ethical standards in government keep public funds and activities accountable to the people who have placed their trust in public officials. City Managers must possess the ability to handle *ethical dilemmas* and properly *apply ethics* in the workplace. **Table 4.4** demonstrates the high level of importance that City Managers and Executive Directors place on dealing with *ethical dilemmas* and *applying ethics policy* in the workplace.

City Managers and Executive Directors place a high level of importance on the ability to handle *ethical dilemmas* and the ability to *apply ethics*. Both populations have a response mode of very important for every sub-category. The ranking percentage of which component is the most important is almost identical for both City Managers and Executive Directors. The responses show a universal attitude toward ethics in the state of Texas, in which executives at the state and local level are in agreement that the ability to handle *ethical dilemmas* and successfully *apply ethics* codes is very important.

The data reinforces the need for NASPAA to require member programs to teach a course dealing with *ethics* in the public sector. The similar responses from City Managers and Executive Directors in Texas show the need to train students in public affairs and administration programs to properly *apply ethics* codes in organizations and deal with *ethical dilemmas* in the work environment. The lack of public trust in government provides the need for public administrators and policy analysts proficient in *ethics*.

**Table 4.4: City Manager and Executive Director Value Perceptions of Administrative Ethics**

Survey Questions As a current City Manager/Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of:		N	% Fairly to Very Important	Mode	Rank % of Most Important
Ethical Dilemmas*	CM	80	90%	Very Important	14%
	ED	32	94%	Very Important	13%
Application of Ethics**	CM	81	94%	Very Important	86%
	ED	32	94%	Very Important	87%

\*34% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important,” 3% selected “Moderate Importance” and 3% selected “Seldom Important”

\*\*16% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important” and 6% selected “Moderate Importance”

## Skill Set

Communication skills are necessary for every public official to possess. The ability to *write* effectively, *speak in public* with ease, and to *bargain and negotiate* on a daily basis are skills that every public manager should possess for effective public management. **Table 4.5** describes the perceptions of City Managers and Executive Directors regarding the sub-categories of *skill set*.

City Managers and Executive Directors perceive the sub-categories of *skill set* as very important skills to possess. City Managers give the skill of *writing* the greatest percentage of responses with 95 percent, followed by *public speaking* with 89 percent and *bargaining and negotiating* with 86 percent. Executive Directors give the skill of *public speaking* the greatest percentage of responses with 97 percent, followed by *writing* with 88 percent and *bargaining and negotiating* with 69 percent. The greatest discrepancy between City Manager and Executive Director perceptions is within the sub-category of skill in *bargaining and negotiating*. The data may suggest that City Managers *bargain and negotiate* with their Mayor and City Council on a regular basis, while Executive Directors are not accountable to deal with the Legislature on a routine schedule.

**Table 4.5: City Manager and Executive Director Value Perceptions of Skill Set**

<b>Survey Questions</b> As a current City Manager/Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of:		<b>N</b>	<b>% Fairly to Very Important</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Rank % of Most Important</b>
<b>Writing*</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	95%	Very Important	38%
	<b>ED</b>	32	88%	Very Important	31%
<b>Public Speaking**</b>	<b>CM</b>	80	89%	Very Important	25%
	<b>ED</b>	31	97%	Very Important	38%
<b>Bargaining and Negotiating***</b>	<b>CM</b>	81	86%	Very Important	38%
	<b>ED</b>	32	69%	Very Important	31%

\*35% of City Managers selected “Fairly Important” while 38% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important” and 12% selected “Moderate Importance”

\*\*10% of City Managers selected “Moderate Importance” and 37% selected “Fairly Important” while 36% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important”

\*\*\*12% of City Managers selected “Moderate Importance” and 42% selected “Fairly Important” while 38% of Executive Directors selected “Fairly Important, 31% selected “Very Important” and 31% selected “Moderate Importance”

City Managers rank *writing* along with *bargaining and negotiating* as containing equal relevance in skills necessary to possess. *Public speaking* follows these subcategories in the ranking. Executive Directors rank *public speaking* as the most important skill to possess, followed by the skills of *writing* and *bargaining and negotiating* receiving identical percentage scores. The outcome is very interesting and shows which communication skills are necessary for executives to possess at the state and local levels of government. **Appendix C** lists the rankings of most important for each sub-category in this study.

## **Most Important Skills to Possess**

Public managers must have diverse knowledge, skills, and abilities in their everyday management of an organization. NASPAA Standards for Accreditation and the categories of *administrative ethics* and *skill set* are not the only knowledge, skills, and abilities that public managers possess. Survey research is limited in that it only gives respondents general categories to choose from each question. Babbie (2004, 274-275) states “Standardized questionnaire items often represent the least common denominator in assessing people’s attitudes, orientations, circumstances, and experiences. By designing questions that will be at least minimally appropriate to all respondents, you may miss what is most appropriate to many respondents.” Therefore, Executive Directors were asked to list the top three skills that are most important to possess for effective public management in Texas State government in no order of importance. This is an open-ended question designed to give a broader picture to determine which knowledge, skills, and abilities are most important for effective public management. The responses were then grouped into categories<sup>9</sup> and the data are analyzed in **Table 4.6**. Please see **Appendix E** for specific, individual responses.

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<sup>9</sup> Choosing categories and placing the individual responses from Executive Directors into each component is a very subjective process. Many responses could intertwine into other broad categories.



**Table 4.6: Most Important Skills to Possess According to Executive Directors**

<b>Category</b>	<b>N*</b>	<b>Percentage Responses</b>
<b>Human Resources</b>	6	7%
<b>Finance and Budgeting</b>	4	5%
<b>Policy</b>	4	5%
<b>Decision-making/Problem Solving/Planning</b>	17	21%
<b>Management/Ethics</b>	20	25%
<b>Communication</b>	17	21%
<b>Understanding of the Political, Legal and Organizational Environment</b>	12	15%
<b>Information Technology</b>	1	1%

\*27 Respondents answered this question

The results show that Executive Directors value the knowledge, skills, and abilities that comprise the categories of NASPAA Standards for Accreditation, *administrative ethics*, and *skill set*. There was a strong emphasis on managerial and leadership skills, communication skills, *decision-making*, and knowledge of the *political* and legislative environments. Asking this open-ended question reinforces the argument that Executive Directors perceive NASPAA common curriculum components as necessary for effective public management.

**Most Important Graduate Degree**

As a follow up question, Executive Directors were asked to list which graduate degree is the most important for a public manager to possess in order to effectively manage a state agency in Texas. The respondents were given a list from the graduate degrees of Master of Public Administration, Master of Public Affairs, Master of Business Administration, and a J.D. (law degree). The responses indicate Executive Directors view the Master of Public Administration degree as the most important to possess. However,

this question did not garner a very high response rate, which leads to chances for bias to exist in the results (Babbie 2004). **Table 4.7** lists the percentage rate of most important to possess for each degree.

**Table 4.7: Most Important Graduate Degree that a Public Manager Should Possess**

<b>Survey Questions</b>	<b>N*</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Master of Public Administration</b>	14	54%
<b>Master of Public Affairs</b>	4	15%
<b>Master of Business Administration</b>	6	23%
<b>JD (Law Degree)</b>	2	8%

\*N=26 with 7 people skipping this question

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter analyzed the results of the survey questionnaire and compared the results with City Manager value perceptions. Data show that Executive Directors perceive NASPAA Standards for Accreditation as important knowledge, skills, and abilities to possess. The response percentages and rankings show that knowledge of *policy*, the ability to *make decisions*, knowledge of *political and legal institutions and processes*, the ability to *apply ethics*, managerial skills, and *public speaking* skills are the most important to possess according to the perceptions of Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas. The following chapter summarizes the project and provides recommendations for future research.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

### **Chapter Purpose**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a summary of the research relating to which knowledge, skills, and abilities Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas perceive as the most important to possess for effective public management. These results are analyzed to provide the academic and practitioner community with relevant and significant information to improve how public management is taught in master degree programs of public affairs and administration. Recommendations for future research are also provided.

### **Summary of Research**

The purpose of this project is to describe the level of importance Executive Directors in the State of Texas place upon their knowledge, skills, and abilities for effective public management. Very few Executive Directors possess graduate degrees in public affairs and administration; but they rank the knowledge, skills, and abilities taught in these programs as very important to possess for effective public management.

Scholarly literature was reviewed to defend the categories of NASPAA Standards for Accreditation, *administrative ethics*, and *skill set* as necessary for effective public management. The conceptual framework was developed as the basis for the research using descriptive categories connected to the literature. A survey questionnaire was developed and sent to the population of sixty-one Executive Directors of state agencies in Texas. This generated a 54 percent response rate, which is significantly high. Chapter 4 analyzes the results using descriptive statistics of percentages and modes and then

compares the results with Brad Sinclair’s 2005 study on City Manager perceptions. **Table 5.1** summarizes the results on NASPAA curriculum components from the perceptions of Executive Directors.

**Table 5.1: Summary of Results**

<b>Curriculum Standards</b>	<b>Components</b>	<b>Mode</b>	<b>Rank*</b>
<b>Management Of Public Service Organizations</b>	○ Policy	Very Important	1
	○ Budgeting and Financial Processes	Very Important	2
	○ Human Resources	Very Important	3
	○ Information Management and Technology Applications	Fairly Important	4
<b>Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis</b>	○ Decision-making	Very Important	1
	○ Problem Solving	Very Important	2
	○ Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation	Very Important	3
	○ Policy and Program Formulation	Very Important	4
<b>Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment</b>	○ Political and Legal Institutions and Processes	Very Important	1
	○ Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	Very Important	2
	○ Economic and Social Institutions and Processes	Moderate Importance	3
<b>Administrative Ethics</b>	○ Application of Ethics	Very Important	1
	○ Ethical Dilemmas	Very Important	2
<b>Skill Set</b>	○ Public Speaking	Very Important	1
	○ Writing	Very Important	2(tied)
	○ Bargaining and Negotiating	Fairly Important	2(tied)

\*Respondents ranking of which is the most important component in each category (Sinclair 2005)

Overall, Executive Directors perceive the knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with the curriculum components of NASPAA Standards for Accreditation as important for effective public management. The results argue that graduate programs in public affairs and administration are teaching the concepts necessary to manage organizations in the public sector. Every component is perceived as very important

except for *bargaining and negotiating, economic and social institutions and processes, and information management and technology applications.*

In comparison with City Manager perceptions, the results are very similar. The biggest discrepancies exist in perceived importance of the sub-categories of *budgeting and financial processes, policy, organization and management concepts and behavior, public speaking, and bargaining and negotiating.* The results show that students in graduate programs should concentrate in specific areas depending on whether they wish to gain employment in state or local government. Executive Directors ranked knowledge of *policy, the ability to make decisions, knowledge of the political and legal institutions and processes, the ability to apply ethics, and the ability to effectively speak in public* as the most important knowledge, skills, and abilities to possess.

In asking open-ended questions of the top three skills that public managers should possess, Executive Directors continued to place a great deal of importance upon the curriculum components of NASPAA Standards for Accreditation. The responses were not surprising due to the similarities of responses in the standardized survey questions of City Managers and Executive Directors. Another reason for the universality of the necessity to possess these skills could result from the excellent Peer Review Process initiated by NASPAA to properly educate future public administrators and policy analysts.

These areas hold importance due to the complexity and broad range of responsibilities that Executive Directors of state agencies confront on a daily basis. There are various actors working in the political setting of government work, and upper-level managers must understand their role within their organization. The size of a state agency

requires specific skills for each Executive Director to possess. But the knowledge, skills, and abilities comprising the categories of NASPAA Standards for Accreditation, *administrative ethics*, and *skill set* suffice as important to possess for effective public management.

### **Next Steps for Research**

Very little literature exists on Executive Directors' roles and responsibilities in Texas. This project was an attempt to shed light onto this issue to determine which knowledge, skills, and abilities are the most important to possess for effective public management. Research on specific agencies and their organizational structure would be a way to determine the skills necessary to possess for employees at certain agencies.

Survey research on high level public officials at the state and local level in Texas has now been used in this project and Brad Sinclair's 2005 Applied Research Project. Survey research could be conducted on upper-level managers in federal government, but more questions should be asked. The knowledge, skills, and abilities listed in this project do not represent the only components that could be perceived as important to possess by public officials. Planning, for example, was a skill that Executive Directors perceive as important to possess, which is not listed in this project's descriptive categories.

One problem with Sinclair's 2005 study is that the results are very broad. The survey responses from Executive Directors prove to be very similar to Sinclair's results. The discipline of public affairs and administration is very broad, so the survey responses show the diversity that exists in the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to possess as a public manager in government. NASPAA Standards for Accreditation are meant to train public managers to understand the complexity of the public sector. Programs are

given great flexibility in training students. The perceptions of Executive Directors help reinforce the need for many broad subject areas to be taught in graduate programs of public affairs and administration. In order to measure the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary to possess in more technical areas in different agencies and municipalities, research is needed on specific job roles with different questions using frameworks that are relevant to that skill. Specializations such as accounting, government information management systems, procurement, and economic development are areas that research could be concentrated upon to measure certain skills.

Structured interviews and focus groups with upper-level public officials, professors of public affairs and administration, and master and doctoral level students and alumni of programs in public affairs and administration would be an excellent way to determine which skills are necessary for effective public management. The research would be a very time consuming project with massive coordination among people involved, but the results could prove to be very reliable and accurate.

Finally, research on the appointment process of Executive Directors and the training necessary to hold this position in the state of Texas would be a good way to make the job more professional. Political appointees are a fact of life in Texas, and the appointments of Executive Directors are no exception. This project determined that Executive Directors are highly educated professionals, but more research is needed in the necessary training required for each agency director and possible succession planning.

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## APPENDIX A

### Survey Questionnaire

**SCALE: 5 – Very Important 4 – Fairly Important 3 – Moderate Importance  
2 – Seldom Important 1- Little or No Importance**

#### **Management of Public Service Organizations**

1. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of information management and technology applications in your role?
2. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of human resources in your role?
3. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of budgeting and financial processes in your role?
4. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of policy in your role?
5. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?

**Human Resources**

**Budgeting and Financial Process**

**Information Management and Technology Applications**

**Policy**

#### **Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques**

6. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to formulate policy and programs in your role?
7. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to implement and evaluate policy and programs in your role?
8. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of decision-making in your role?
9. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability of problem solving in your role?
10. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?

**Policy and Program Formulation**

**Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation**

**Decision-making**

**Problem Solving**

## **Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment**

11. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of the political and legal institutions and processes in your role?
12. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of economic and social institutions and processes in your role?
13. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the knowledge of organization and management concepts and behavior in your role?
14. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?  
**Political and Legal Institutions and Processes**  
**Economic and Social Institutions and Processes**  
**Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior**

## **Administrative Ethics**

15. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to handle ethical dilemmas in your role?
16. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the ability to apply ethics in your role?
17. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?  
**Ethical Dilemmas**  
**Application of Ethics**

## **Skill Set**

18. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of writing in your role?
19. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of public speaking in your role?
20. As a current Executive Director, what degree of importance would you place on the skill of bargaining and negotiating in your role?
21. In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?  
**Writing**  
**Public Speaking**  
**Bargaining and Negotiating**

## Demographics

22. What is the highest level of education you have achieved?

- High School**
- Some College**
- College Graduate (Bachelors)**
- Some post-graduate work**
- Graduate Degree**
- Other**

23. If you have achieved a graduate or Master's degree, what kind of field was it in?

- MPA (this includes public administration or affairs)**
- MBA**
- Engineering**
- Education**
- J.D.**
- M.D.**
- Other**
- Not Applicable**

24. Please specify your gender?

- Male**
- Female**

25. Please specify your current age range?

- Under 30**
- 30-40**
- 41-50**
- 51-60**
- Over 60**

26. How long have you been employed as an Executive Director at your current state agency/organization?

- 0-3 years**
- 4-6 years**
- 7-9 years**
- 10 years or more**

27. Please list the top 3 skills that are necessary for public managers to possess in Texas State Government?

- a.**
- b.**
- c.**

28. In your view, which type of graduate degree is the most important for a manager to possess in order to effectively manage a state agency?

**Master of Public Administration**

**Master of Public Affairs**

**Master of Business Administration**

**J.D. (Law Degree)**

29. Please feel free to provide any comments that you have regarding this survey



## APPENDIX B

### Respondent Characteristics

#### Highest Level of Education Achieved

Survey Question	N*	Percentage
High School	0	0%
Some College	0	0%
College Graduate	5	16%
Some post-graduate	6	19%
Graduate degree	20	62%
Other	1	3%

\*N=32 with one person skipping this question

#### Type of Graduate or Master's Degree Achieved

Survey Question	N**	Percentage
MPA*	5	19%
MBA	4	16%
Engineering	1	4%
Education	1	4%
J.D.	5	19%
Other	5	19%
Not Applicable	5	19%
MD	0	0%

\*This includes public administration or affairs

\*\*N=26 with 7 people skipping this question

#### Gender of Respondents

Survey Question	N	Percentage
Male	24	75%
Female	8	25%

#### Current Age Range of Executive Directors

Survey Question	N	Percentage*
Under 30	0	0%
30-40	1	3%
41-50	5	16%
51-60	20	62%
Over 60	6	19%

**Length of Employment as Executive Director at Current State Agency**

<b>Survey Question</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>0-3 years</b>	15	47%
<b>4-6 years</b>	8	25%
<b>7-9 years</b>	3	9%
<b>10 years or more</b>	6	19%

## APPENDIX C

### Sub-topic Rank of Most Important

#### Most Important Sub-topic of Management of Public Service Organizations

Survey Question*	N	Percentage
Human Resources	5	16%
Budgeting and Financial Processes	9	28%
Information Management and Technology Applications	1	3%
Policy	17	53%

\* “In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?”

#### Most Important Sub-topic of the Application of Quantitative and Qualitative Techniques of Analysis

Survey Question*	N	Percentage
Policy and Program Formulation	1	3%
Policy and Program Implementation and Evaluation	5	16%
Decision-making	16	50%
Problem Solving	10	31%

\*“In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?”

#### Most Important Sub-topic of the Understanding of the Public Policy and Organizational Environment

Survey Question*	N	Percentage
Political and Legal Institutions and Processes	17	55%
Economic and Social Institutions and Processes	1	3%
Organization and Management Concepts and Behavior	13	42%

\* “In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?”

### **Most Important Sub-topic of Administrative Ethics**

<b>Survey Question*</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Ethical Dilemmas</b>	4	13%
<b>Application of Ethics</b>	27	87%

\*“In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?”

### **Most Important Sub-topic of Skill Set**

<b>Survey Question*</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Writing</b>	10	31%
<b>Public Speaking</b>	12	38%
<b>Bargaining and Negotiating</b>	10	31%

\*“In your view, which of these is the most important from this category?”

## APPENDIX D

### Survey Comments

1. Not sure if 27 was in order of importance and it lists b., c., a. I placed the most important under a.
2. One needs to be flexible in the education and thoughts. Open-mindedness is also very important for all things. Lastly creditability is essential to function well.
3. The skills required are indirectly proportional to the size of the agency. The larger agency Executive Director may depend on their staff to fill the gaps in their skills. A small agency Executive Director must be more complete because they lack the staff to compensate for any shortcomings.
4. Good, insightful questions.
5. For technical fields, a degree in an appropriate field of study may be more beneficial than a management oriented degree.
6. Currently enrolled in Masters of Science in Leadership and Ethics program.
7. Because I have a Board that develops policy, I am not as involved or place as much emphasis on policy development issues in my role as Executive Director.
8. I left 5 blank because I don't believe one is more important. I left 17 blank because I cannot distinguish between the two choices. On 23 I would've checked both MPA and JD if that were an option – I have a joint degree. For 28 I would (modestly) say that a joint degree is the optimal choice.
9. An interesting survey. Please provide us with the results when you're done. By copy of this email I'm alerting Barry Bales at the LBJ School of your survey. He will be interested in your results as they might apply to his planning for the Governor's Executive Development Program.

## APPENDIX E

### Most Important Skills

Category	N	Individual Responses
<b>Decision-making / Problem Solving / Planning</b>	17	Decision-making, Ability to be decisive and use good judgment, Decisiveness, Decision Maker, Decision-making, Common Sense, Decision-making, Analytical Thinking, Analytical, Match Assignments with Skills, Planning, Strategic Thinking/Planning, Planning, Strategic Thinking, Problem-solving, Problem-solving, Ability to Solve Problems/Be Creative
<b>Management/Ethics</b>	20	Leadership, Management, Leadership, Manage and Motivate People, Leadership, Leadership, Management, Leadership, Change Management Skills, Management, Management Skills, Managerial, Collaboration, Versatility, Stress Management, Emotional Intelligence, Focus on Customer Service, Strong Ethics, Ethics, Ethics
<b>Communication</b>	17	Public Speaking Skills, Communication, Writing, Communication, Networking Skills, Writing, Listening, Communication, Communications, Public Speaking, Communications, Communication Skills, Communications, Negotiation Skills, Social Skills, Social Skills, Interpersonal Skills, Ability to Handle Complaints from Public
<b>Understanding of the Political, Legal, and Organizational Environment</b>	12	Political Savvy, Political Understanding, Organization, Know Environment in Which They Work, Understand the Political Environment, Subject Matter Knowledge, Ability to Answer to Multiple Board Members, Knowledge of Law/Regulation, Understanding of Field Operations, Business, Ability to Work Within Legislative System, Organization
<b>Human Resources</b>	6	Obtaining well qualified staff and let them do their jobs and help them when they need it, People Management, Personnel Skills, Personnel/Management Relations, People Management, Administration Implementation Skills
<b>Finance and Budgeting</b>	4	Financial and Budget Expertise, Thorough Knowledge of Financial Issues, Budgeting, Money Management
<b>Information Technology</b>	1	Technological Awareness
<b>Policy</b>	4	Policy Level Analysis, Knowledge of Role or Policy, Policy Making, Balancing Implementation with Budget Issues