

Exploring the Differences Between Regulatory Bodies, Professional Associations, and Trade Unions: An Integrative Review

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This article presents an integrative literature review to identify and assess how regulatory bodies, professional associations, and trade union organizations differ and interact. A small number of studies, from across a diverse range of disciplines, have researched this topic. Nine studies were analyzed, resulting in the identification of 16 themes and their associated characteristics. Although these three organizational types may share some overarching ambitions, the perspectives taken in achieving these ambitions are often different, as is the ultimate or primary beneficiary of the actions. Further research is needed to validate these findings and to explore which of the various themes have the greatest impact on achieving organizational goals and avoiding tensions, conflict, and bias.

Keywords: Occupational licensure, professional associations, regulation, trade unions

Regulatory bodies, increasingly through their establishment of legislation, are being given an explicit focus or mandate on public protection (Kennedy, 2005). In the United States, regulatory bodies are separate from professional associations and trade unions; however, this separation is not the case in all countries. In some jurisdictions, the functions of regulatory bodies, professional associations, and trade unions coexist. For example, in some Canadian provinces, Spain, and Portugal, the roles of the regulator and the professional association are held by the same organization (Bryce & Bayne, 2010; Benton, Fernández-Fernández, González-Jurado, & Beneit-Montesinos, 2015). In other countries such as Iran, all three responsibilities sit in a single organization (Esmacili, Dehghan-Nayeri, & Negaradeh, 2012).

Regulatory bodies are aware that their roles are constantly evolving, as are professional associations and trade unions (Dalton, Speakman, Duffey, & Carlson, 1994; Wright, 2011; National Council of State Boards of Nursing, 2016). The consequences of these changes can result in confusion among stakeholders as to the similarities and differences between these entities (Thomson & Paterson, 2014). The objective of this article is to present an integrative literature review to identify and assess how regulatory bodies, professional associations, and trade union organizations differ and interact.

Addressing Conflicts of Interest

Increasingly, calls have been issued to separate these organizational functions to avoid actual or perceived conflicts of interest (Dollinger, 2000; Payne, 2002). These calls are not unique to nursing. Many disciplines are having similar debates. In fact, lawyers, librarians, social workers, and sonographers are all facing calls to separate regulatory powers from the powers of professional associations and trade unions (Greenblat, 2017; Hovekamp, 1997; Simon, Webster, & Horn, 2015; Thomson, & Paterson, 2014).

Although many opinion articles and websites have sought to differentiate the characteristics, roles, and responsibilities between regulatory bodies and professional associations, to the authors' knowledge, no comprehensive analysis of the literature has been published. Indeed, many of the peer-reviewed articles initially identified tended to focus on the challenge of declining membership numbers in professional associations and its impact (Alotaibi, 2007; McSean & Jakobsson, 2009; White & Olson, 2004; Phillips & Leahy, 2012; American Psychological Association, 2013; Markova, Ford, Dickson, & Bohn, 2013; Mata, Latham, & Ransome, 2015; Simon et al., 2015).

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2017) has recently focused on the importance of having a clear separation of powers between a set of related actors that can have competing or conflicting interests. The theoretical underpinning for the work comes from the regu-

latory model described as *capture theory* (Stigler, 1971), which is where the actions of the regulatory body are overly influenced by related interest groups. OECD (2017) stresses the importance of a balanced set of relationships between three interested actors: the regulator, the government, and the industry. Figure 1, modified from OECD (2017), provides a schematic representation of the actors and their associated relationships.

Few studies have looked at the nature of the relationships between the various actors. Benton, Gonzalez-Jurado, and Beneit-Montesinos (2013) sought to map some of the characteristics between government and the regulatory body and highlighted that the proximity of influence could have both advantages and disadvantages. However, as shown in Figure 1, this relationship is only one of three worthy of exploration.

Method

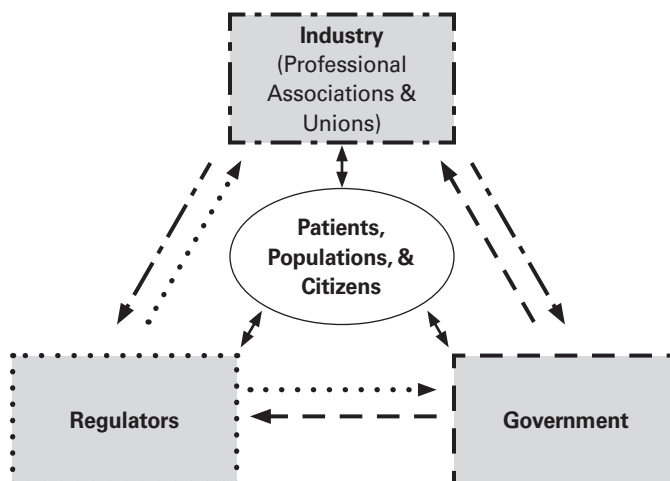
Initial review of the literature identified a paucity of research on this topic, and the available material was highly varied in the focus and methods. Therefore, to achieve the aim of this study, the authors conducted a structured examination of the published and grey literature. Due to the variations of the research designs and the fact that a wide variety of literature from a range of disciplines needed to be considered, an integrative review was conducted (Whittemore & Knafl, 2005). According to Pompeo, Rossi, & Galvao (2009), an integrative review is a broad-based approach that may include both theoretical and empirical studies that use different methodologies. A comprehensive review of the method by Soares et al. (2014) concluded that no agreed-upon standard exists in terms of conducting such reviews. However, Soares et al. (2014) did identify five desirable and six undesirable steps that they contend should be followed/avoided to undertake a comprehensive review. Furthermore, both Torraco (2005) and Whittemore and Knafl (2005) comprehensively explored the requirements for conducting an integrative review, and it is based on these recommendations that this study was conducted to identify, critique, and synthesize the literature.

Search Strategy

A structured search of a number of bibliographic sources was conducted (Scopus, CINAHL, Web of Science, PubMed, and Google Scholar). No limits in terms of date or language of publication were applied, and the search was conducted on March 31, 2017, using the following Boolean search terms: ((Regulator AND (Board OR Body OR Chamber OR College OR Council OR Guild OR Order OR Ordem)) AND ((Professional OR Specialist OR Trade OR Learned) AND (Academy OR Association OR Body OR College OR Society)) OR ((Trade OR Labor) AND (Union OR Syndicate))). Editorials, opinion pieces, and nonreferenced Web content were excluded from the study.

FIGURE 1

Interactions and Relationships Between Actors



Note. Modified from OECD (2017).

Data Cleaning and Additional Article Identification

Bibliographic information including abstracts and cited references for all articles identified by the search strategy were downloaded and imported into *Endnote 7* (Version 7, build 7072, Thomson Reuters, New York, NY). After duplicates had been removed, the titles and abstracts were initially screened for content alignment with the study aim. Full-text copies of the remaining articles were obtained, imported into *NVIVO 11 Plus* (Version 11 plus release 11.2.0.611, QSR International, Melbourne Australia), and subject to content analysis. Additionally, the cited works contained in the identified articles were reviewed for any additional articles congruent with the search criteria and thought to be relevant and useful for inclusion in the detailed analysis.

Critique and Synthesis

A thematic analysis of the content was performed and supported by *NVIVO 11 Plus*, the qualitative analysis software package that was used to identify key variables through the application of a critical comparative thematic analysis of articles. The primary purpose of this approach is to allow findings to be identified based upon frequent, dominant, or significant issues inherent in the raw data and without any preconceived constraints (Bryman & Burgess, 1994). By coding content and writing memos that include reflection on the analysis, themes, and their relationships to one another can be analyzed (Thomas & Harden, 2008). This approach enabled the method described by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2013) consisting of data reduction, data display, and data comparison followed by conclusion generation and verification to be followed. Additionally, a summary evidence table providing a brief synopsis of the various articles was generated.

The inductive coding started with a close examination and reading of all the articles to immerse the readers in the content

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