

**The Perceptions and Practices of Members of Ontario College Boards
Regarding Board Self Evaluation**

by

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Abstract

The main purpose of this study was to examine the practices and perspectives of Ontario college board members with respect to board self evaluation. A mixed methodology approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods was employed. Document collection, a survey and interviews were the principal methods used to gather data. This study added to the knowledge provided by the 2005 Deloitte Study of Ontario College Boards by updating the data regarding the current rates of Ontario college boards self evaluation practice and by offering more clarity on the rigour of those boards' self evaluation practices. The findings of this study provide insights into why some boards do self evaluations while others do not. The findings demonstrate strong support for board self evaluation but also reveal that some boards are still not performing evaluations of their own performance and that more attention must be given to improving the effectiveness of current self evaluation practices. Twelve recommendations to improve board self evaluation practices, grounded in the responses of this study's participants and the findings in the literature, are offered. This study provides new knowledge about board member beliefs with respect to self evaluation but also raises questions for further research such as exploring possible differences between board members of self evaluating boards versus those from non-self evaluating boards. Personal reflections were presented based on my own experience serving on boards and my readings of the literature. In summary, a case for board self evaluation is made.

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CHAPTER I Introduction to the Study

The current environment of high public expectations of both public and private sector organizations with respect to openness, transparency and accountability coupled with several corporate scandals in recent years and the oversight issues associated with the 2008 crisis in the global financial sectors (Gilles, 2008) has shone the spotlight on board governance practices around the world. In the context of post secondary education, Taylor (2005) observes that today's college and university boards are faced with issues that are much more complex and challenging than those faced by boards in previous decades. He notes that there may be books on the topic of governance in general however there is a need for more scholarly research on higher education governance.

Experts in the field of governance agree that one of a board's key responsibilities is to ensure that it regularly reviews its own performance (Bandsuch, Pate & Thies, 2008; Nadler, 2004; Minichilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007). As part of their accountability to their stakeholders, boards in both the public (Kezar & Eckel, 2004) and private sector (Long, 2006) must address their own performance as well as that of the organization they oversee.

Statement of the Issue

In Ontario, colleges are required by the provincial government to evaluate their own performance. However, despite directives from governments and/or recommended board self evaluation practices by governance experts and professional associations, recent

studies of college boards in Ontario and other jurisdictions reveal a significant level of non-compliance regarding board self evaluation guidelines and/or directives.

The Ontario Government, through legislation (Ontario, 2002) and a binding directive (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003b) from the Minister, Training, Colleges and Universities, has defined the governance structure and roles and responsibilities of college boards as well as outlined some very basic operational guidelines for college boards. The College Compensation and Appointments Council (CCAC) has also issued guidelines for Ontario college boards. In comparing the Minister's binding directive and the CCAC guidelines it is observed that both the Minister and the CCAC address the issue of the evaluation of board governance. The Minister's binding policy directive refers to "assessing regularly the attainment by the CEO of corporate goals and outcomes, and the effectiveness of the board with respect to governance" (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003a, p.5). The CCAC Governance Resource Manual refers to "assessing periodically the effectiveness of the Board with respect to governance and the attainment of corporate goals and outcomes" (p.36).

Despite the CCAC guidelines and Minister's directive, it would appear that some Ontario college boards are not fully complying with one of their key responsibilities and that is to evaluate their own effectiveness. In a 2005 study of Ontario colleges' governance and accountability practices conducted by Deloitte on behalf of the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities (MTCU), the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO) and the CCAC the findings indicate that

only 60% of respondents replied that their board formally assessed its performance on an annualized basis (Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 2005). This review also noted that other studies of non-profit boards had similar results regarding board evaluation practices. A report done by the Florida state government on college board governance indicated the same pattern of results (Florida State House of Representatives, 1995). So while boards are expected to evaluate their effectiveness in governing their college there is evidence indicating many boards are not. Studies of the private sector boards on the topic of evaluation yield similar results. For example a 2004 survey by the Institute of Internal Auditors of 109 corporations from the United States, Australia, Canada and Britain found that only 29% evaluated individual board performance.

Purpose of the Study

As noted by scholars who study governance there is a need for more in-depth study of board evaluation practices. The 2005 Deloitte Study revealed a significant rate of non compliance by Ontario college boards with respect to the requirement to perform regular board self evaluations. The purpose of this study was to examine, from the perspective of current college board members, board evaluation practices in Ontario. This study explored the reasons why some boards do self evaluations while others do not and makes recommendations, based on the feedback from current college board members, that may i) assist boards improve their self evaluation practices and ii) assist non-complying boards to implement self evaluation practices.

Rationale and Significance of the Research

Despite ubiquitous calls from scholars and governance experts for boards to evaluate their own performance (Bandsuch, Pate & Thies, 2008; Carver, 1997; Minichilli,

Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007; Sonnenfeld, 2002) and government directives to do so many boards are not measuring their own performance. Other factors such as rising global expectations regarding accountability will necessitate that most boards, especially public sector boards such as college boards, have formal evaluation processes in place.

In general there is agreement in literature on the type of work that boards should undertake but there are few studies examining the work that the board actually does (Bennett, 2002; Kezar & Eckel, 2004). There is ample literature supporting the need for board self evaluation and also various board evaluation instruments are available. However, there is a paucity of literature addressing why boards don't evaluate their performance (Kezar & Eckel, 2004). Further, the literature has not fully examined the perceptions of board members regarding what they believe would be helpful to them in order to effectively measure their own board performance. Minichilli, Gabrielsson and Huse (2007) observe that research on governance to date has not paid enough attention to board evaluation practices, particularly in the area of how evaluations can help boards to more effectively lead the organizations they govern. While there have been some studies addressing why boards should evaluate, what boards should evaluate, and how they should evaluate more research is required on what boards are actually doing regarding self evaluation practices. McIntyre, Murphy and Mitchell (2007) call for more "first hand account approach" studies by interviewing board members to hear their personal opinions on board governance practices including evaluation. Minichilli et al. recommend further research into "why and under what circumstances boards adopt evaluation" (p. 620).

This study contributed to a better understanding of why boards do or do not conduct evaluations. Comparisons were made between the recommended board self

evaluation practices found in the literature and the practices of Ontario college boards. This study also added to the knowledge provided by the 2005 Deloitte study of Ontario college boards by updating the data on self evaluation practices regarding current rates of self evaluation compliance and offering more clarity on the types of board self evaluation practices Ontario college boards employ. Perhaps more importantly greater in depth information on the personal beliefs of board members regarding evaluation practices was discovered. The study's conclusions added insight from college board members' perspectives regarding i) how to increase the participation of boards in formal evaluation practices and ii) how to improve current practices.

Personal Ground

My choice of topic, college board self evaluation practices in Ontario, results from my review of the readings and discussions on leadership and governance that began at the 2006 OISE Summer Leadership Institute and from reflection on my own 17 years experience as a senior college administrator including the last seven as a college president. I have worked closely with college boards and other non-profit boards during those 17 years. My college board experience spans two different colleges and includes working with well over a hundred board members and eleven board chairs. I have witnessed, and was a part of boards that demonstrated strong leadership, for example, developing and overseeing the implementation of a strategic plan and, most importantly, evaluating the plan's effectiveness. Unfortunately, for the majority of this time I have also been involved with boards that did not self evaluate and failed to realize the importance of regularly assessing their own effectiveness as leaders and stewards of an organization.

I believe one of the key roles of governance is leadership. This role includes establishing the overall purpose and goals of the organization and being accountable for the achievement of those goals. Boards must ensure their college has a good strategic plan, a culture that reflects the vision and mission of the college and policies that enable the college to meet its strategic objectives. To meet these responsibilities the board has to hire an effective president to act on the board's behalf in leading and managing the college. Part of the board's governance leadership responsibilities also includes providing advice and guidance to the president as well as evaluating the president's performance. That said, the board must be careful not to relinquish its governance leadership responsibilities with respect to strategic planning and accountability to the college president and his/her executive team. While the board may charge the president with implementing the strategic plan and managing the operations of the college the board remains accountable. Having an effective board self evaluation system in place that is linked with the president's evaluation may contribute to the board's ability to maintain the delicate leadership balance between themselves and the president and may help the board meet its accountability responsibilities.

Given the important roles and responsibilities of college boards and calls by governance scholars (Bandsuch, Pate, & Thies, 2008; Carver, 1997; Minichilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007; Nadler, 2004) for board self evaluation it is puzzling to me why many boards do not assess their own performance or do so superficially. Even among those that perform assessments, methods are often classed as informal and/or sporadic as opposed to formal and regularly scheduled. My own experience with college boards regarding self evaluation practices may be a microcosm of the whole college

system as reported earlier in this chapter. Determining whether my perception was accurate was key to my choice of this research topic. My goal in conducting this research is to contribute to the body of knowledge regarding board self evaluation practices by:

- i) investigating current self evaluation practices of Ontario college boards
 - ii) soliciting the views of Ontario college board members on board self evaluation
- and
- iii) offering recommendations regarding Ontario college board self evaluation practices based on those views and the relevant research and recommendations found in the literature.

Research Question and subsidiary research Questions

Main Question:

What are the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college boards regarding board self evaluation?

Subsidiary Questions:

1. a) What are the policies, procedures and instruments used by Ontario boards to formally evaluate their performance?
 - b) How many Ontario boards formally evaluate their own performance?
 - c) How does this study's survey results compare to the 2005 Deloitte Study?
 - d) How would board members rate the effectiveness of their current board evaluation practices?
2. What are the beliefs of college board members regarding evaluating:
 - a) the performance of the board as a whole?
 - b) the performance of individual board members?

3. What are the beliefs of college board members regarding a common set of board evaluation processes and tools versus having the autonomy to develop and implement their own criteria?
4. What are board members' beliefs regarding reporting publicly on their board's
 - a) evaluation processes and b) evaluation results?
5. Why do some college boards evaluate their own performance and some do not?
6. What do college board members believe would be beneficial to assist them to:
 - a) implement board self-evaluation?
 - b) improve current board self evaluation practice?
7. How do the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college board members compare with results and recommendations found in the literature regarding board self evaluation?

Research Design and Methodology

This study employed a mixed methodology approach by combining quantitative and qualitative methods. Morgan (1997) and Neuman (2002) note that mixed methodology design is a common and acceptable research practice that allows the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the topic or phenomenon being studied. Document collection, a survey and interviews were the principal methods used to gather data. While this study was primarily descriptive, that is seeking to discover “what is” it has elements of causal relationship design (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006) as I sought to discover reasons why some boards self evaluate while others do not. Analysis of the data collected from surveys, interviews and board documents were used to address the main

research question concerning the perceptions and practices of Ontario College boards regarding self evaluation.

A conceptual framework with respect to board competencies developed by Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) was used to help analyze the written responses to the survey (Appendix C) and the interview questions (Appendix G) that dealt specifically with why boards conduct or don't conduct self evaluation. Chait et al. suggest that boards may use this framework to help design their self evaluation process and instruments. The framework which is described in Chapters II and IV proposes that there are six key board competency dimensions: contextual, educational, interpersonal, analytical, political and strategic.

Data Collection and Analysis

With the exception of my college there are twenty one Anglophone colleges and two Francophone colleges in Ontario. Each Office of the Board of Governors of Anglophone colleges was requested to either send me board documents related to self evaluation policies and any instruments they use for board self evaluation or to inform me that no such documents existed. Board policy documents are available to the public upon request and in a few cases are posted on college websites. All twenty one colleges responded to this request. The Presidents of the two Francophone colleges were interviewed to determine if their college boards practiced board self evaluation and if so, how those boards conducted their evaluations. The data from those interviews were used only to calculate the percentage of Ontario college boards currently practicing board self evaluation.

Twenty one Anglophone colleges in Ontario were requested to ask their board members to complete the survey. The request in a Word document attachment (Appendix A) was sent via email to each college president with a copy to the board secretary. The email also included a letter in a Word attachment (Appendix B) explaining the research and inviting board members to complete the survey which was accessed from an embedded internet link in the letter. Twenty colleges agreed to participate and distributed my invitation letter to their board members via email. The Chair and President of one college declined to participate as their Board's agenda was already set for the year. Their rationale for not participating is explained in Chapter III page 77.

My college was not part of the survey or interview data collection in order to eliminate any possible bias that may have occurred due to my working relationship with those board members. My college's board was used to pilot the survey and the interview questions. Gall, Gall and Borg (2006) strongly recommend that survey questionnaires and interview questions are pre-tested with a group of subjects that have similar characteristics as those of the target population being studied. A thorough pre-test that included an opportunity for respondents to comment on the clarity of the questions helped to ensure there was little probability of ambiguity. I also asked a research survey design expert to review my questionnaire before I used it in the field.

The main research question and all the subsidiary research questions with the exception of question 1(a) which dealt with college board self evaluation policies, procedures and instruments currently in use and question 6(b) which asked for suggestions on how to improve current self evaluation practices were addressed by the survey (Appendix C). Document collection of existing board policies and instruments

and data from the interviews were used to address question 1(a) and data from the interviews were used to address question 6(b). The survey consisted primarily of a set of statements that required a response on a Likert-type scale using a strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree and no opinion options. Gall, Gall and Borg (2006) and Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) note that surveys using Likert-type response scales are often used in descriptive studies and/or studies that examine practices of groups. Each item of the survey was designed to specifically collect data that helped answer the research questions. The survey also included a section that had multiple choice predetermined response options to address the research questions that could not be easily answered using a Likert-type scale. The last part of the survey had a comment section to allow respondents to note additional information that they weren't able to provide because the predetermined response options didn't specifically address the answer they wished to provide. The survey had an introductory section that explained the purpose of the research and its significance, provided assurances regarding the confidentiality of the respondents, noted participation was voluntary and stated the definitions related to board self evaluation that were to be referenced when completing the survey.

Once the survey was completed four college boards were selected for the interview phase of the study based on the data from the survey and the response to the request for board policies related to self evaluation. Two college boards that practiced formal self evaluation and two that did not were chosen. The boards were selected based on providing a representative sample of Ontario college boards with respect to size, geographic location and urban/rural settings. A request along with a letter of information (Appendix D) explaining the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of participation

and participants' rights was sent to the president of each of the selected colleges. The presidents were requested to consult with their board chair and, subject to the chair's approval, to forward the letter via email to board members. The interview participants were selected from those who responded to me that they were willing to be interviewed. Participants were selected to represent the diverse characteristics of board members such as years of service and internal and external board members. Three board members including the Board Chair from each of the subject colleges were interviewed. The interviews were audio taped with the consent of the subjects and transcribed by me for the purpose of analysis. A more detailed explanation of the selection process is provided in Chapter III.

Data analysis involved the use of triangulation methods. By employing a variety of analytical methods the weakness of any single method is offset and the probability of valid results is enhanced (Smith, 1991).

Limitations of the Study

The principal limitation relates to the generalizations of the findings. While the survey included 20 of the 24 colleges resulting in 105 participants who completed the whole survey and relevant documents or responses were analyzed from all 24 colleges the interview sample size (12) was small when compared to the total population. Some may argue that the data and resultant findings from the interviews have limited generalization to the Ontario college system. Since the study was directed at Ontario college boards whose selection methods for members may differ from college boards in other jurisdictions as well as not-for-profit boards in general it will be left to interested

readers to determine what application, if any, the findings and suggestions have to their particular circumstances.

The definitions of board self evaluation for this study were created by the researcher. Although the definitions were developed based on the researcher's review of board self evaluation best practices found in the literature the definitions may have been interpreted differently by participants in this research. I tried to limit any ambiguity an individual may find in the definitions by following the feedback I received in the pretest phase which resulted in me adding a statement that directed the participant to select the definition that most closely matched their board's situation. Furthermore, readers of this dissertation may also interpret the definitions in different ways and hence this may limit the generalizations of the findings.

This study did not evaluate the effectiveness of boards or the effectiveness of any evaluation process and instruments they are using. While the study did take into account the views of board members regarding factors contributing to boards conducting self-evaluation and offered suggestions to improve evaluation practices, it did not offer or recommend specific evaluation models or instruments.

Despite the assurances to participants related to confidentiality and anonymity, there was a slight possibility of validity issues if board members felt embarrassed about their board's evaluation practices or lack thereof. Conversely some board members' perspectives may be biased from an unjustifiable or unsubstantiated opinion that their board practices are better than others.

Lastly, there was the possibility of some bias by the researcher although this was offset by using triangulation methods and an acute awareness of my research role and a conscious commitment to be an objective observer and data collector.

Definition of Terms

The following definitions were provided to participants in this research study in order to provide them a common understanding of terms related to board self evaluation. These definitions were created by the researcher solely for the purposes of this research. Boards that participated in this study who did not meet the criteria for self evaluation as defined below were considered as not practising self evaluation.

Board self evaluation involves a commitment by a board to conduct at least annual reviews of its performance and to discuss the results of the evaluation. For the purposes of this study board self evaluation will be classified into two main types, formal and informal.

Formal self evaluation is defined as a board having a written evaluation policy and/or processes and instruments in place that the board uses, at least annually, to conduct an evaluation of their performance. The board may conduct the evaluation or hire a consultant to do so. There is an analysis of the data by the board or a consultant hired by the board. The board holds structured discussions regarding the results and takes corrective action where appropriate. Records of the review, discussion and corrective actions are kept.

Informal self evaluation is defined as having no written policies in place or having a written policy but lacking written evaluation processes or instruments that are used consistently from one evaluation period to another. Discussions regarding any evaluation results are of a general nature with minimal analysis of any data collected. Reviews are conducted at least annually and records may or may not be kept.

Board self evaluation of collective performance refers to the evaluation of the performance of the board as a whole and does not involve assessment of individual board members.

Board self evaluation of individual performance refers to an evaluation of the performance of each individual board member. The results would be available only to the individual member and the chair of the board and, where applicable, the consultant hired by the board to conduct the evaluations.

Summary

In this chapter an overview of the research issue and the purpose of this study along with supporting rationale both at a professional level and a personal level were presented. The research questions were stated, the design and methodology and study limitations were overviewed, and definitions for the purposes of this study were offered. The rest of the thesis is organized in the following way:

Chapter II: Literature Review

Chapter III: Research Design and Methodology

Chapter IV: Research Findings

Chapter V: Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

Chapter II Literature Review

In this chapter definitions and principles of governance, types of boards, a brief history and an overview of Ontario Colleges' governance structure, rationale for board self evaluation, for example, legal & regulatory requirements, as well as board compliance with evaluation expectations will be reviewed. This study focused on Ontario college boards, hence the overview of the structure of Ontario college boards was provided to give the reader an understanding of the diversity of board members as well as the roles and responsibilities of Ontario college boards. Evaluation best practices and evaluation frameworks are also reviewed. Overall a sound case for boards to evaluate their own performance is made.

Definitions, Principles and Roles of Governance

The literature on governance offers a variety of definitions of governance and lists of principles for boards to consider. While there is no commonly accepted definition of governance (Edwards, 2003; Institute of Internal Auditors, 2006) these definitions do share common elements. For the purposes of this thesis a few definitions from both the public and private sector will be presented and the commonalities noted. Generally each of the definitions address the structures, policies and processes that a board should have in place to effectively oversee the operations of its company or organization while protecting the rights of shareholders and/or stakeholders. This section of the literature review will also cover recommendations found in the literature regarding principles and roles of governance. In the context of this study principles refer to guidelines or standards of practice that a board may use when conducting its work.

This review will begin with definitions of governance from three public sector organizations that are involved in providing guidance on governance to boards in the public sector. The three are the College Compensation and Appointments Council (CCAC) which provides services to Ontario colleges, the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) and the Ottawa based Institute for Good Governance. Definitions of governance developed for the private sector will also be provided by examining governance guidelines published by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and by the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX).

The College Compensation and Appointments Council (CCAC) published a resource manual for governors that includes binding directives from the Ontario Minister of Training, Colleges, and Universities. While CCAC doesn't provide its own definition of governance a somewhat detailed definition from the Minister's binding policy directive on Governance and Accountability can be found on pages 27 and 28 of the resource manual.

Governance may be defined as the laws under which an organization is governed and the decision-making structures it employs. Good governance requires that the policies, processes, and structures be put in place to promote effective operation of the organization and to allow a corporation to fulfill its mandate and meet its objectives. Essential elements include organizational integrity, financial management, communication with stakeholders and clients, collecting and reporting of information, and good management practices. (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003a, p. 1)

The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) has published a comprehensive "Guide to Good Governance" in which it defines governance and recommends principles, policies and practices for boards to follow. Similar to governance scholars such as Chambers (2005) the OHA believes the board is responsible for leadership and oversight

in the following key areas: strategic planning, quality assurance, financial oversight, management oversight, risk management, communications and governance. While the OHA manual is much more thorough than the CCAC manual its definition of governance is less detailed and essentially breaks governance into two elements; what the board does and the how it performs its work without specifying what the work is.

Governance means two things: it is what a board does – the areas in which the board exercises a governance role and the approach the board takes to exercise its role. Governance is also used to describe how the board does its work – the processes used by the board to perform its governance role. (Ontario Hospital Association, 2005, p.13)

While this definition is arguably less helpful when read in isolation, the OHA manual is quite instructive as it provides a very thorough discussion of the roles and responsibilities of board members and suggestions on how to perform those duties. Examples of governance roles that are covered include strategic planning, fiduciary responsibilities, hiring and evaluation of the CEO, risk management and board evaluation processes. By comparison, the CCAC lists roles and responsibilities for board members but doesn't offer in-depth discussions on ways to perform those roles with the exception of sections on nurturing the Board-CEO relationship and the Board's Code of Ethics.

The Institute for Good Governance, a non profit organization based in Ottawa, is focused on studying governance practices primarily in the public and non profit sectors. It provides educational and consultative services on effective governance to boards in those sectors. The Institute, funded by the Social Development Directorate of Human Resources Development Canada as well as other federal government departments, suggests that:

Governance is a process whereby societies or organizations make important decisions, determine whom they involve in the process and how they render account. Governance is about the more strategic aspects of steering the larger decisions about direction and roles. That is, governance is not only about where to go, but also about who should be involved in deciding, and in what capacity. (Graham, Amos & Plumptre, 2003, pp.1-2)

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an international think tank dedicated to global sustainable economic development with over 30 member countries, has developed a set of principles and practices to guide corporate boards. In that document the OECD provide a definition that is private sector centric but may be instructive to the public sector boards by simply substituting “company” with “organisation”.

Corporate governance involves a set of relationships between a company’s management, its board, its stakeholders and other stakeholders. Corporate governance also provides the same structure through which the objectives of the company are set, and the means of attaining those objectives and monitoring performance are determined. (OECD, 2005, p.1)

In addition to providing a definition of governance the OECD offer principles that address critical areas of governance such as effective governance frameworks, shareholder and stakeholder rights, and roles and responsibilities of boards. A discussion on governance principles follows this review of governance definitions.

Similar to the work of the OECD the Australian Securities Exchange (ASX) Corporate Governance Council over the years has developed corporate governance guidelines. The ASX Corporate Governance Council updated their guidelines in 2007 for implementation in 2008 and note that the practice of good governance requires adaptation to constantly changing business environments. The Council state its guidelines will be regularly reviewed and updated and that boards should use the guidelines as a framework

for effective governance practices rather than a “one size fits all” prescription. It offers this definition of governance:

Corporate governance is the framework of rules, relationships, systems and processes within and by which authority is exercised and controlled in corporations. It encompasses the mechanisms by which companies, and those in control, are held to account. Corporate governance influences how the objectives of the company are set and achieved, how risk is monitored and assessed, and how performance is optimized. Effective corporate governance structures encourage companies to create value, through entrepreneurialism, innovation, development and exploration, and provide accountability and control systems commensurate with the risks involved. (ASX Corporate Governance Council, 2007, p. 30)

As one reviews these definitions they have much in common with differences found mainly in the specificity of the definitions and the clarity related to level of decision making. There are varying views in the literature about how involved boards should be in the day to day decision making with most sources recognizing that boards should stay at a more strategic level related to decision making and leave the operational decision making to management (Carver, 2001; Graham, Amos & Plumptre, 2003). That said there is recognition that there is no one perfect model of governance and that a board's governance style should be determined by the circumstances it is dealing with and the environment in which it operates (Long, 2006; Nadler, 2004). Each of these definitions makes reference to processes that a board can use to help decide the best course of action related to determining the major goals of the organization and how those goals will be attained. It is clear that decision making is a key role of boards.

Accountability and assessing performance are also common themes. Related to accountability is a theme of communication with stakeholders which in today's world of

operating in an open and transparent manner is not only important but necessary. The definition found in the CCAC guidelines makes a direct reference to communication while the OECD and ASX definitions infer communication is important by their references to relationships and accountability.

While it may be helpful to have a common definition of governance given the complexities of today's global environment, the various jurisdictions and environments in which boards function, and the differing views of governance by scholars and governments, a more constructive approach is to keep an open mind on the basic common elements. These elements include oversight, planning, decision making, accountability and communication with stakeholders. The governance style or philosophy that a board employs to fulfill its duties should be left to the board itself based on the needs of the organization it oversees and the stakeholders it serves.

Examining definitions of governance provides a rudimentary understanding of what boards do. To gain a greater appreciation of the work of boards it is helpful to review principles or guidelines for boards that have been developed to assist boards perform effectively. The OECD principles for corporate governance were originally developed in 1999 as an attempt to establish a set of global corporate governance standards and guidelines (OECD, 2005). The principles were reviewed commencing in 2002 and a revised set of principles was issued in 2004 to address issues and concerns created by the collapse of companies such as Enron and World Com. There is an emphasis on ensuring proper board structure and processes, protecting the rights of shareholders and stakeholders, communicating in a transparent manner with all stakeholders and monitoring the effectiveness of the organization and the board.

The OECD state that adherence to the principles is voluntary and that they are not meant to replace the need for government regulation of corporate practices. The OECD also note that even though the principles were designed with a focus on the private sector the principles can also serve as helpful guidelines when looking to improve governance practices in the public sector.

The Institute of Internal Auditors based in the United States offers one of the most expansive set of principles or guidelines available in the literature. Excerpts of the principles listed below were formulated by the Institute based on their review of effective governance principles published by regulatory agencies around the world.

1. Ensure a properly organized and functioning board that has the correct number of members; an appropriate board committee structure; established meeting protocols; sound, independent judgment about affairs of the organization; and periodically reaffirmed membership.
2. Make sure board members possess appropriate qualifications and experience, with a clear understanding of their role in the governance activities, a sound knowledge of the organization's operations, and an independent/objective mindset.
3. Assure that the board has sufficient authority, funding, and resources to conduct independent inquiries.
4. Maintain an understanding by executive management and the board of the organization's operating structure, including structures that impede transparency.
5. Articulate an organizational strategy against which the success of the overall enterprise and the contribution of individuals are measured.
7. Establish governing policy for the operation of key activities of the organization.
8. Set and enforce clear lines of responsibility and accountability throughout the organization.

14. Clearly define and implement risk management policies, processes, and accountabilities at the board level and throughout the organization.
15. Effectively use external auditors, ensuring their independence and adequate resources.
16. Provide appropriate disclosure of key information, in a transparent manner, to stakeholders.
17. Provide disclosure of the organization's governance processes, comparing those processes with recognized national codes or best practices. (Institute of Internal Auditors, 2006, p. 12)

This set of principles certainly provides an extensive list of guidelines for boards to follow. The principles appear to touch all aspects of governance from oversight responsibilities to transparency and accountability expectations to ethical value setting. While the Institute for Internal Auditors does state that the list is not exhaustive despite its length what is interesting to note, given the topic of this thesis, is that there is no direct reference to boards conducting evaluation of their own performance. At best the reader is left to infer that board self evaluation may be part of the stated principles, for example 1, 2, 5 and 17. However there are several examples of scholars of governance (Kiel & Nicholson, 2005; Nadler, 2004; King, 2007; Sonnenfeld, 2002) and either governments or regulatory agencies (London Stock Exchange, 2004; Treasury Board of Canada, 2004) publishing principles and guidelines for good governance that clearly state that boards must assess their own performance both at a collective level and an individual level.

Before leaving this discussion on definitions and principles of governance a review of Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005) and McIntyre, Murphy and Mitchell (2007) perspectives on governance roles sheds further light on what boards are expected to do as well as the complexity of the work and the need for flexibility. Chait et al. observe that

the work of the CEO and the board have begun to overlap especially in the non-profit sector due to increased leadership expectations for the CEO. In these situations the board must not relinquish its leadership role but rather work collaboratively with the CEO to establish the organization's mission, goals and priorities. Both parties should develop a high level plan for the organization but leave the day to day management to the CEO and the organization's management team. Chait et al. explain that while board members have started to assume some management roles at least at an oversight level, a basic principle of modern day governance is that the board does not manage or meddle in the operational affairs but rather ensure that the organization governed by the board is well managed. A similar view is expressed by McIntyre et al. who propose that a key purpose of the board is to play a check and balance role with the organization's management. They also point out that the board's role is not only to prevent negative behaviours but, as importantly, to encourage positive ones such as strategic planning and well developed risk management processes. The board does this by holding the CEO accountable and by ensuring proper policies, processes and controls are in place to ensure the long term viability of the organization.

Chait et al. (2005) and McIntyre et al. (2007) agree that board committee structures often mirror operational areas, for example finance. Chait et al. point out that boards often recruit people with senior management experience that are strategic thinkers; however they note that board nomination committees also seek a "Noah's ark of professional experts" (p.4) looking for expertise in areas such as finance, marketing, law and human resources. McIntyre et al. view boards as teams and suggest that like any successful team the composition of the board must include members with a variety of

knowledge, skills and experience so that collectively the board has the expertise to perform all of its roles effectively.

To avoid the potential of boards becoming too involved in managing and competing with the CEO over leadership areas that overlap with the board governance, for example mission and strategic planning, Chait et al. (2005) suggest boards view governance as a multidimensional and complex practice. The authors propose that governance involves three modes each independent of the other yet each complementing the others. They draw comparisons on the complexity of governance to Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences and Richard Birnbaum's work on the multidimensional characteristics of effective leaders. Just as leaders must be multi skilled and talented to be effective, so too must today's boards.

The three modes of governance are fiduciary, strategic and generative. The fiduciary mode refers to the board's stewardship of the organization's assets while the strategic mode involves the board forming a partnership with the organization's senior administration to develop the strategic directions for the organization. The generative mode refers to the board providing leadership by engaging in robust discussions on the core activities of the organizations and on the emerging trends regarding those activities. All three modes are equally important. In order to provide effective leadership to the organization the board must perform well in all three modes and adjust their style (mode) to the circumstances of the organization recognizing these constantly shift over time and life cycle of a board/organization.

Governance as leadership entails more than working in generative mode. Like the executive leadership so valued in organizations it involves not just mastering each of the governing modes but choosing governing modes in the first place,

determining when to operate in which mode (Chait et al. 2005 p.31).

Nadler's Board Engagement Framework

Having looked at governance definitions and principles an overview of Nadler's work on how boards approach their work may provide further understanding of governance and the challenges boards face to be successful. Nadler (2004) identifies 5 types of boards that he uses to classify boards from minimally involved to fully engaged strategically to fully engaged operationally. The five types are:

- 1) The Passive Board. This type of board acquiesces to the CEO. The board's involvement is minimal and their primary function is to endorse management's decisions.
- 2) The Certifying Board. The primary function of this type of board is ensuring that proper business practices and controls are in place. They evaluate the CEO and ensure succession plans are in place.
- 3) The Engaged Board. The Board views itself as a partner with the CEO. They offer advice and guidance to the CEO. Discussions at the board table are more robust and substantive than types one and two. The Board defines its roles and responsibilities as well as those of the CEO. The Board regularly evaluates the CEO and the company's performance.
- 4) The Intervening Board. In this scenario the board is more involved in the organization's major decisions. The board meets more often than other types of boards and has more operational type discussions. This style of board is usually found in smaller non profit organizations or in larger organizations that are in crisis.

- 5) The Operating Board. The board is intimately involved in the day to day operations of the organization. They make the major decisions and direct management to implement them. Boards such as this usually exist because of voids in management skills and experience.

Nadler's classification model describes general characteristics. It is important to recognize that boards may exhibit characteristics of more than one type depending on the circumstances. For example, a passive board may quickly move to being an intervening board, albeit probably temporarily, should the CEO suddenly leave but with possible qualified successors available within the organization or to an operating style should there be no obvious successors within the organization.

The classification model is useful as an initial step for any board that wishes to improve its performance. Either the board itself or an external consultant engaged by the board can use the model to determine where it is on the continuum of engagement and then develop a plan of improvement.

There is a connection between the work of Nadler (2004) and that of Chait et al. (2005). In Nadler's classification model the preferred board type is arguably the Engaged Board as it strikes the right balance with the CEO and the board regarding the sharing of leadership, oversight and strategic responsibilities. Chait et al. in presenting their tri-mode model of governance - fiduciary, strategic and generative - seek to accomplish this same balance. Nadler presents the characteristics of an engaged board which involve active participation in agenda setting, constructive, respectful and challenging discussions, thorough preparation for meetings and establishing a set of values that guide

the board's work. These align well with the views of Chait et al. regarding how to fulfill the board's leadership roles.

The Development of the Ontario College Board Governance Structure

When Ontario developed the Ontario College System in the mid 1960's, it was perhaps only natural for it to borrow elements of the university governance structure in creating the college governance structure, albeit with some important differences. While the principles of democracy can be found in the Ontario College's governance structures, the university bicameral model is not overtly evident although there are some similarities. Jones (2002) comments that, as new universities were created in Ontario during the 1960's and 70's, the charter legislation for each university called for board members to be appointed by the board itself rather than be government appointments. During this same time period the Ontario government was also creating a new college system and took a similar approach regarding board membership. At the inception of the colleges the government established the Council of Regents to advise the government on college affairs and administer employee terms and conditions of employment on behalf of the college system. The Council was also charged with reviewing nominations from boards for appointment to governor positions and given executive authority to appoint governors to boards. In 2002, the Council of Regents was renamed the College Compensation and Appointments Council (CCAC).

Dennison (1994) argues that since colleges were created by provincial governments through legislation and funded by governments to meet various socio-economic goals of governments, then colleges should at least have an "arms length" relationship with

government. However, Dennison places an important condition on such “quasi independence”, that is, the colleges should have governance structures built on democratic principles.

In Ontario, all colleges have boards of governors who have direct responsibility for the oversight of the college’s operations. However, as crown corporations, their independence is “quasi” compared to Ontario universities that are all independently chartered except for Queens University. With the exception of four internal members who are elected by their respective constituent groups and the president, who is a voting member by virtue of his/her office, the board controls who shall be members of its board subject to regulations set out by the government and CCAC approval of board nominations. Such approval is based on guidelines issued by the CCAC. Since the president of every college serves at the pleasure of the board, arguably the board also controls that seat from an appointment perspective. Boards normally ensure that their external members reflect the demographics of their community including business/industry sectors, labour, aboriginal and visible minorities, and geographic representation.

The Ontario government requires a college board to have four of its members to be elected from internal constituent groups (Ontario Ministry of Training Colleges and Universities, 2003b). These four groups are faculty, students, support staff and administrative staff. The employee groups are elected for a term of three years and may stand for election for a second term, serving up to a maximum of six years. The student representative is elected for a term of up to two years and may stand again for a second term with the maximum length of service being four years. Each college board must set

out in its by-laws the election procedures and terms of office. While the legislation allows a minimum of twelve and a maximum of twenty members most Ontario college boards have sixteen to eighteen members including the president; hence, the internally elected members constitute about twenty two to twenty four per cent of the board membership.

In listening to calls for further democratization of the college governance structure, the government in the late 1980's did not fully utilize the university bicameral model but did borrow elements of it. One of the most noticeable differences between the university and college governance structures is the absence of a senate in the college structure. However, since the late 1980's, each college is required by a ministerial binding policy directive to have an academic council and, since 2003, the by-laws of each college board must include the mandate, roles and responsibilities, the membership of the academic council, and the process for filling a seat on the council. While the academic council has very strong representation from faculty and students - they have the majority of seats – the council is an advisory body to the president and, unlike a university senate, has no decision making authority.

According to Dennison (1994), the creation of academic councils was the Ontario government's response to reports by Skolnik (1985) and Pitman (1986) calling for greater representation from employees in an advisory capacity regarding academic affairs. Dennison noted a weakness in the Ontario regulations that created academic councils was that the terms of reference were too general resulting in each college developing their own specific terms of reference which ranged from quite detailed to non-existent. Interestingly, almost a decade after Dennison made those observations, the Ontario

government, in tabling a major piece of legislation, related regulations and policy directives regarding the governance and operations of colleges, did not address Dennison's criticism although it now requires boards to create a specific by-law for academic councils. The Minister's Binding Directive issued in April 2003 states:

The board of governors is to ensure that an advisory college council is established, the purpose of which is to provide a means for students and staff of the college to provide advice to the president on matters of importance to students and staff. The board of governors is to ensure that the structure, composition, terms of reference and procedures for the council are established in by-law. (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003a, p. 5)

While Ontario college boards are required to ensure academic councils exist and to define their mandate, terms of reference and membership it is important to note that academic councils have no reporting relationship to the board and they act solely in an advisory capacity to the president. Hence unlike university senates their influence on institutional governance is minimal.

Why evaluate?

Boards have many reasons to evaluate their own performance. Plumptre (2006) states that evaluation helps identify weak board processes and members and that evaluation processes that are well executed contribute to a better understanding of governance roles, and improved team dynamics. Properly conducted evaluations should lead to improved board performance which is vital as over the years but, especially in the last decade, boards have been given greater responsibility and accountability.

Boards are no longer seen as or expected to be "rubber stamps" and "window dressing" for management but rather are expected to be leaders in setting and monitoring

the strategies of the organization (Minichilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007). Roberts, McNulty and Stiles (2005) concluded that while the structure and membership of a board influences a board's effectiveness they don't determine it. More important are the dynamics at board meetings. Similar to the work of Nadler (2004) they argue that to be effective board members must constructively challenge and question management and each other and ensure all proposals and plans are thoroughly discussed and explored before decisions are made. Governments, regulators, shareholders and stakeholders are demanding boards play active leadership roles and be accountable for their organization's performance (Kiel & Nicholson, 2005; Lawler, Finegold, Benson & Conger, 2002).

A case for board evaluation based on legal and regulatory requirements or expectations as well as the advice and opinions of governance advisory bodies, experts and scholars will now be discussed.

Government and Regulatory Requirements/Expectations

“Requirements” refers to situations where boards are mandated by government legislation or regulations or a regulatory body directive to self evaluate while “expectations” refers to situations where boards are advised through guidelines to self evaluate but retain the autonomy to decide whether to follow the guidelines.

In Ontario there is a legal requirement for college boards to evaluate their performance. The Ontario Minister, Training, Colleges and Universities, issued a binding policy directive that instructs boards to regularly assess their own performance along with that of the CEO (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities 2003a, p.5). The Ontario College Compensation and Appointments Council have issued guidelines for

good board practices that include recommendations to conduct self evaluations at least annually.

Governance resource manuals and board review reports in other jurisdictions such as British Columbia, California and Florida also state that college boards have a responsibility to assess their own performance and take corrective action when appropriate (Board Resourcing and Development Office – Province of British Columbia 2005; Community College League of California, 1996; Florida House of Representatives, 1995) but stop short of legally requiring board self evaluation.

The British Columbia government, in 2001, created the Board Resourcing and Development Office (BRDO) to provide advice and guidance to boards overseeing British Columbia's public sector corporations which includes the province's colleges. The BRDO reports directly to the Premier. Its primary goal is to improve board performance by providing standards of practice for boards and by setting the expectations of the B.C. government regarding accountability and disclosure requirements. The BRDO's resource manual for boards published in 2005 includes best practice guidelines for governance and disclosure. The section on governance encourages adaptation of the guidelines based on the individual circumstances of each board considering items such as legislative and unique sector requirements. The disclosure section is more prescriptive and states that public sector boards supported by funds from the British Columbia government must comply with the disclosure guidelines no later than April 2006. Board evaluation is discussed in both the governance and disclosure best practices sections. There is a strong recommendation in the governance section for boards to conduct annual assessments of the board as whole, board committees, the board chair and individual

board members. While the BRDO suggest who and what to evaluate it leaves the how to each board. In the disclosure section boards have no discretion; they are required to report publicly on their assessment process or if they have no process in place they must explain how they know they are performing satisfactorily.

Approximately a decade earlier California and Florida implemented similar expectations for their college boards. The Florida House of Representatives published a report in December 1995 that reviewed how well Florida community colleges were adhering to the state's accountability requirements that were passed in the legislature in 1991. Among the recommendations to improve the colleges' governance practices was a call for boards to formally evaluate their own performance and to "submit to an outside assessment of the board itself every three years" (Florida State House of Representatives, 1995, p. 12).

The Community College League of California (CCLC) is an advisory body rather than a regulatory agency. It publishes a comprehensive resource manual for college board members which is updated periodically. In the 1996 version there is a recommendation for boards to self evaluate but it left to the discretion of the board how formal or informal the evaluation process should be and whether or not they want to also assess individual board member performance (Community College League of California, 1996). The manual does make reference to the accreditation standards of the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) of the Western Association of Schools and Colleges. Their accreditation process requires boards to have an evaluation process in place however institutions are not required to be accredited by the ACCJC. A review of the most current edition of the CCLC manual reveals that board evaluation is

still recommended and encouraged but not required (Community College League of California, 2008). The manual does provide specific suggestions on what should be evaluated, who should be involved and ways to measure board performance.

There are similar expectations in other areas of the public sector as illustrated by recommended practices in the Ontario hospital sector and the pervasiveness of the British Columbia public sector governance guidelines discussed earlier. The Ontario Hospital Association (2005) recommends that a board evaluate itself collectively as well as its committees and individual board members. To further encourage compliance the OHA provide in its guidelines detailed advice on evaluation processes and include a variety of assessment instruments for boards to consider.

A review of regulatory bodies responsible for corporate operations in the private sector indicates similar requirements for private sector boards regarding board evaluation practices. In November 2003 the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) issued strict new rules for corporate governance. The rules are very similar to organizations in other jurisdictions as well as the OECD governance principles. While not all of these rules, which are designed for the private sector, apply to the public sector many do, such as rules or principles concerning governor qualifications, recruitment and responsibilities. Most germane to this discussion is the NYSE requirement that board self evaluation is conducted on an annual basis at a minimum. Such evaluations are to include all committees of the board. An important point is that companies listed on the NYSE must comply with these rules (New York Stock Exchange, 2003).

The Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) and the London Stock Exchange (LSX) guidelines for board evaluation are similar to New York's but stop short of being

compulsory (ASX Corporate Governance Council, 2007; London Stock Exchange, 2004). Companies are expected to disclose how they are following the guidelines or how they have adapted them to their company's situation. An interesting point on the Australian and British approach is a requirement that if a company decides not to adapt a specific governance guideline(s) they are required to explain why in their annual report. In Australia this approach has been termed "if not, why not?" (ASX Corporate Governance Council, 2007, p.5) and in Britain it is termed as "comply or explain". (Financial Reporting Council, 2006, p.1). This type of approach regarding compliance with the guidelines is seen as balancing the needs of regulatory or advisory bodies to protect the shareholders and stakeholders while giving some flexibility in how organizations adapt specific guidelines. Both the ASX and the LSX recommend that each board publish its process for evaluation. In Australia's case the recommendation for the board to disclose its process for evaluation was added in 2007 when the guidelines were updated in an effort to make board operations more transparent.

While legislation and directives from regulatory bodies are important governance scholars feel that these directions represent minimum requirements. Nadler (2004) notes that if a board simply reacts to new regulatory governance requirements to ensure compliance it is missing a tremendous opportunity to truly improve. In a similar vein Sonnenfeld (2002) recommends that a board must go beyond the minimum legislated requirements if it is to perform effectively and ensure its company or organization doesn't become a headline the likes of Enron. To move beyond compliance a board must decide what its goals and activities should be, participate regularly in professional development, develop and implement processes measuring the board's own effectiveness

and use the results of its performance review to improve its governance practices (Kiel & Nicholson, 2005; Nadler, 2004).

Beyond Legal & Regulatory Requirements

Besides the legal and/or regulatory requirements there are other compelling reasons for boards to evaluate themselves. Governance experts and scholars around the world see board evaluation as an essential component of good governance practices (Bandsuch, Pate & Thies, 2008; Carver, 1997; Minichilli, Gabrielsson, & Huse, 2007). There is also support in the literature related to boards demonstrating good leadership by maintaining trust with stakeholders, serving as a role model, being open, transparent and accountable, ensuring good Board/CEO relations, practicing continuous improvement strategies, and demonstrating accountability as well as the growing requirement in some sectors for external accreditation. In order to determine its effectiveness in each of these areas a board must regularly assess its structures, policies and processes and measure the results of its work.

Trust, Transparency and Role Modeling

Based on calls for boards to be leaders (Chait et al., 2005) boards must create and nurture an environment of trust. This requirement may offer one of the most compelling reasons for boards to evaluate. Board members must trust each other to work effectively together (Sonnenfeld, 2002) but they must also have the trust of their stakeholders both externally and internally (Bandsuch, Pate and Thies, 2008). For example, the communities that a college serves and the government that sets broad societal goals for higher education must have confidence that the college board is in charge and operating effectively. Internally students, staff and faculty rely on the board to work

collaboratively with them and the senior administration. This work involves setting the strategic goals of the college, ensuring that the operations of the college are aligned with the strategic goals, monitoring the operations of the college and taking corrective action when necessary. There are many ways to establish trust including being open and transparent about board operations (Bandsuch, Pate & Thies) and demonstrating the board is monitoring its behaviours and evaluating its effectiveness through disclosure of its processes (ASX Corporate Governance Council, 2007). For example, the Ontario Hospital Association (2005) believe that a board can achieve public trust in part by conducting the majority of its meetings open to the public, publishing minutes of meetings, limiting in-camera meetings to items involving personnel and/or legal issues, and ensuring that appropriate communication processes are in place that reach both its internal and external stakeholders.

The Ontario Hospital Association (2005) notes the importance of role modeling by boards. By being open and transparent a board serves as a role model for the organization it oversees. A board that chooses to communicate with both its external and internal stakeholders is demonstrating not only respect for its stakeholders but is also signaling the organization regarding the behaviour it expects from its employees. Being open about its self evaluation practices is another way that a board can role model behaviours it expects of its CEO and employees.

Accountability, Quality Assurance and Continuous Improvement

The College Compensation and Appointments Council (2003) in its resource manual for Ontario colleges' boards of governors state "Accountability or the obligation to show that responsibilities have been carried out properly and that the desired outcomes have

been achieved is the corollary of the governance authority provided. Accountability is a key issue for governments” (p. 28).

In discussions regarding leadership the words accountability, openness and transparency are listed as desirable characteristics of good leadership. In today’s world these same characteristics are demanded of governments as well as organizations that are funded in whole or in part by the government. The general public wants proof that their tax dollars are being spent wisely and hold their governments accountable to provide that proof. Governments, in turn, hold all agencies and institutions they fund accountable but must do so in way that meets the government’s needs without being overly intrusive in the work of those organizations. When designing regulations for higher education institutions King (2007) notes most governments recognize that they must “be careful to avoid excessive microregulation, having to balance the requirement for accountability with the recognition that creativity, intellectual dynamism and scientific development are dependent upon quite high levels of institutional and academic autonomy” (p. 416). Ontario illustrates King’s point.

In 2005, Ontario’s premier, Dalton McGuinty, released his plan for higher education entitled *Reaching Higher: The McGuinty Government Plan for Postsecondary Education*. There are three major goals in the plan that address improving quality, access and accountability in Ontario’s postsecondary education system. In the plan the government clearly states that it would hold postsecondary institutions accountable for achievement of those goals (Ontario Ministry of Finance, 2005). As part of the implementation of the *Reaching Higher Plan*, the government introduced multi-year accountability agreements (MYAA’s). These agreements require each college and university to outline how it is going to achieve the government’s goals and how it will

report its progress. While the government sets out its expectations via its goals for higher education it leaves the means as to how those expectations are achieved to each institution and its board.

An integral part of an organization's accountability responsibilities is to have quality assurance practices in place. According to the Ontario Hospital Association (2005) the board's role related to quality assurance involves the oversight of management performance systems, financial controls, external relations, quality of services provided and the board's own performance. The board must ensure that standards and measurement criteria and processes are in place in each of these areas. The board holds management accountable for measuring quality, reporting the results to the board and, when appropriate, recommending plans of action to address areas requiring improvement.

In this new age of heightened accountability, boards have another compelling reason to embrace quality assurance practices. In the absence of the institutions voluntarily doing it themselves, the undesirable alternative would be governments imposing standards. King (2007) observes that the movement towards quality assurance and regulatory systems in higher education is similar to what is occurring in other sectors. Currently most governments in the western world have not been as prescriptive in the higher education sector as in others, for example the financial and corporate sectors. That said, King notes that as accreditation standards are introduced and updated in various jurisdictions there is the real potential for governments to be much more prescriptive in how the standards will be set, measured and reported. He discusses examples in the Netherlands and Britain where quality assurance standards and frameworks were heavily influenced by the government or agencies independent of higher education institutions.

In reviewing the British higher education governance environment Salter & Tanner (2000) discuss the historical resistance of universities to state imposed quality assurance standards and frameworks. In order to preserve the principle of academic freedom and the university's role of creating and distributing knowledge academics argued that a university must be autonomous and should be allowed to "...democratically organize its own affairs unrestricted by and unaccountable to, any outside body..." (p. 67). In today's world of accountability, and the public's rightful demand to know that they are receiving value for their tax dollars such extreme ideals as non-accountability are no longer acceptable. According to Salter and Tanner the push to hold higher education to be more accountable began in the 1950's and early 1960's with the creation of colleges and polytechnics in response to the need to create a more vocationally skilled workforce. The 1980's saw the adaptation by government of practices in the private sectors to the public sectors. The government believed that applying private sector management techniques would improve the performance of the public sector and that universities and colleges were part of the public sector. Debates turned to how to measure value for investment and the efficiency and effectiveness of each institution and its programs. The authors note colleges and polytechnics which had a different set of values than the universities due to having less autonomy were more accepting of government's demands for accountability. Realizing that the probability of persuading government to exempt them from being accountable was highly unlikely academics moved to a strategy calling for self regulation.

King (2007) cites and supports the work of scholars in Australia such as John Braithwaite who espouse the belief that self-regulation by the higher education sector

leads to greater acceptance and commitment by institutions and their faculties as opposed to prescribed regulatory standards and practices. He also points out that allowing a self-regulation system doesn't mean an easy path for higher education. The scholars who argue for self-regulation also believe that governments should "come down hard" (p. 420) when it appears self-regulation is not working or being abused by institutions. This is known as "responsive regulation" (p. 422) where complying institutions are not interfered with, but institutions that are not in compliance are subject to consequences imposed by governments. The advantage of such an approach is that it adds to the credibility of the self regulation model. Regardless of whether it is prescribed or left to the institution, the board must ensure that its institution has an effective quality assurance framework in place. Part of the framework should be to include measuring its own performance as well as the various activities of the institution. By doing so a board in a sector and jurisdiction where the government is amenable to effective self regulatory systems has control of its own destiny and much less probability of government intrusiveness in the work of its institution.

A board adhering to accountability and quality assurance principles should follow what are commonly known as continuous improvement practices and insist that its company or organization also employ such practices (Canadian Coalition for Good Governance, 2005; Kiel & Nicholson, 2005; Plumptre, 2006). An organization with such practices in place is able to adapt to change as well as to better respond to the needs of its customers or clients (Senge, Kleiner, Roberts, Ross & Smith, 1994). In its basic form continuous improvement involves saying what you will do, doing what you say and measuring if you did what you said and how well you did it then analyzing how you

might improve regardless of your performance. When a board evaluates its own practices it should be checking whether it is doing what it set out to do and assessing how well it did. Practicing continuous improvement is not only a desired underlying theme in board evaluation policies and processes; it also presents another opportunity for a board to serve as an exemplary role model by engaging in behaviours it wants its organization's employees to emulate.

The Board & CEO

Ingram and Weary (2000), similar to Fisher (1991), Conger, Finegold, and Lawler (1998) and Carver and Carver (2001), believe that not only should a board regularly assess its own performance, but a board should link the president's performance review process with its own. Carver and Carver say that a board should define for the president the ends or outcomes it expects but it should not define the means or the how other than to state what means are unacceptable, for example, violating human rights is unacceptable. Both Ingram and Weary and the Carvers also recommend that the board should use similar criteria in evaluating itself as it does for the president. Ingram & Weary argue that the actions of the board affect the performance of the president and that the converse is also true. They provide sample performance assessment policies and practices for boards to consider.

Nadler (2004) makes a point that to be effective the CEO and the board must work together by jointly developing board agendas and agreeing on indicators of success. In recognition of the heavy demands on the board's time and resources as well as that of the CEO, Conger et al. (1998) suggest that not all areas have to be evaluated annually.

In any particular year, the board should select what areas to assess with the understanding that, over a few years, all joint areas of board & CEO responsibility should be evaluated.

A board has an important responsibility in tandem with its CEO to play an effective leadership role in the organizations it oversees (Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, 2007; Chait, Ryan and Taylor, 2005). This point is well illustrated by the significant leadership role that Ontario college boards are expected to fulfill. The Ontario government, in delegating oversight responsibility for a college to a board, has very high expectations regarding the performance of the board. The Minister's Binding Policy Directive is quite prescriptive regarding the roles and responsibilities of the board. From a leadership perspective the most pertinent of those roles include establishing an effective governance structure, overseeing the development, implementation and evaluation of the college's strategic and annual business plan, hiring and evaluating the president/C.E.O. and assessing the board's effectiveness (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003a).

In addition to these roles the board also has a responsibility to ensure its policies and procedures create an environment that enables the board's strategic goals to be achieved. While the board may delegate this responsibility to the president, it still is accountable. As Carver (2001) states the board must "as a group be responsible for its own actions, its omissions, its agenda and the delegation it makes" (p. 2). In measuring how well the institution is achieving its strategic goals the board is indirectly measuring its own effectiveness. For example, if a college is not achieving some of its strategic goals, is it due to shortfalls for which the president is responsible or is it due to the governance structure and supporting board policies and processes? Unless the board is

evaluating its own structure, policies and practices, and how well these align with and support the work of the president as well as the college operations this type of question is difficult to answer.

Fisher (1991) feels that the president's effectiveness is affected by the policies and behaviours of the board. He calls for external review of board governance practices for two major reasons. The first is to help ensure the board and the president work together productively. The second is to ensure that the internal college community is clear on the decision making processes, especially concerning who is empowered to make various kinds of decisions. Fisher goes as far as to suggest that the board committee that evaluates the president should also evaluate the board and that a review by an outside consultant should occur every five years. Fisher's rationale is supported by others such as Conger, Finegold and Lawler (1998) who state:

Evaluations create a way for the board and the CEO to hold each other accountable to clearly defined performance expectations while avoiding the dangers of getting the board involved in day-to-day management. Evaluations can also improve the operations of the board, clarify the respective roles of the board and the CEO and ensure that both consistently focus on their responsibilities. (p.120)

Accreditation

Growing expectations regarding higher education accreditation both provincially and globally is another significant factor that boards must consider as they examine their governance practices. When the Ontario government passed the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Act, 2002, it significantly affected the limited accreditation mechanisms in place for colleges by granting authority for program approvals to each college's board of governors. In doing so, the government expected the college system to

develop, implement and maintain a self-regulatory mechanism that would provide assurance that college programs approved by boards of governors are consistent with the program standards and credentials framework issued by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities. The government also wanted the college to establish a mechanism to address program quality assurance. The Ontario college presidents approved and funded the creation of two new services that would operate as subsidiaries of Colleges Ontario (formerly the Association of Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology of Ontario (ACAATO)) in order to address the government's expectations. The Credentials Validation Service is responsible for verifying that new program proposals from colleges meet provincial standards. The second service, the Program Quality Assurance Process Audit, which is responsible for monitoring quality assurance practices in Ontario colleges, began operation in 2006. Both services are overseen by a management board whose responsibilities include the establishment and monitoring of policies and procedures and hiring of staff to implement the policies and procedures.

In 2006 the Ontario government created the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) that has a mandate to "ensure continued improvement of the postsecondary education system by monitoring quality in the sector, access to the system and the accountability of public colleges and universities" (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2006, p. 1). As HEQCO is just in its infancy it remains to be seen what impact it will have on the two recently created accreditation related services within the Ontario college system. Regardless, clear signals are being sent by governments in Ontario and other jurisdictions related to expectations for accreditation. College boards have a duty to pay attention to these signals and ensure their policies and

practices meet or exceed the benchmarks set by accreditation agencies in Ontario as well as in other jurisdictions. As noted below there are situations where accreditation involves examining how boards evaluate their own performance.

Accreditation of Ontario colleges is also very relevant as Ontario begins to offer applied degrees, pursue applied research initiatives, and seek college/university partnerships that involve transfer of course credits and/or the offering of dual diploma/degree programs. In other jurisdictions where accreditation agencies function, part of their process involves reviewing the governance practices of the educational institution. For example, in California the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) has eight major standards they use in accrediting colleges (Community College League of California, 1996, 2008). Standard 8 refers to a review of governance structure and policies including the board process for evaluation of its own performance.

In Ontario, the government created the Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB) in part to oversee applications from colleges that wished to offer applied degrees by conducting a rigorous review of the college's capacity to offer the degree and then making a recommendation to the Minister regarding approval of the college's degree granting request. In developing its policies, standards and procedures PEQAB notes "its work is consistent with the trend toward the harmonization of postsecondary educational standards manifest in such other jurisdictions as the United States, the European Union..." (Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board, 2006, p.5). While PEQAB doesn't directly assess board governance policies and practices currently, it does include a requirement that there is a governance structure in

place as part of its review criteria when assessing the institution's capacity to deliver a program. It would seem that as PEQAB pursues the harmonization theme with other jurisdictions it may be only a matter of time before a college's governance structure and policies become a more significant part of PEQAB's accreditation process.

As colleges decide whether or not to enter the world of applied research accreditation requirements must be an important consideration. Many research funding agencies require institutions to go through an accrediting process before being eligible to apply for funding. For example, in Canada the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) has a very rigorous accreditation process. Part of that process includes the institution's board approving and monitoring the institution's research policies and procedures.

Regardless of the accreditation requirements of agencies such as PEQAB and NSERC, as college leaders, boards who want their college to compete in a global environment should welcome external accreditation. Through the process of conducting regular and thorough performance reviews boards can ensure their policies and practices meet the current and future accreditation standards in Ontario and other jurisdictions whether it involves academic partnerships, degree offerings or applied research projects. It is interesting to note that one of the reasons that the OECD created their Principles of Corporate Governance which includes evaluating board performance was to assist countries to benefit from the global capital market: "...if they are to attract long-term 'patient' capital, corporate governance arrangements must be credible, well understood across borders and adhere to internationally accepted principles" (OECD, 2005, p.13). In a similar vein ASX Corporate Governance Council (2007) suggest that in order to stay

competitive in today's global marketplace organizations need to meet or exceed the standards being set in other jurisdictions. I realize some in higher learning circles may take offence to the comparison with the business world but the reality is that universities and colleges do operate in a global marketplace. Higher education institutions seeking to successfully work in other countries or develop partnerships with other post secondary institutions in other jurisdictions must pay attention to international accreditation and governance standards.

Relationship between Board and Corporate Performance

In the most recent literature scholars are taking a position that boards who regularly evaluate their performance not only can improve their own performance but also that of the organization they oversee (Minichilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007; Keil & Nicholson, 2005). Further board evaluations when properly conducted can help prevent scandals and corporate catastrophes such as Hollinger and Enron (Keil & Nicholson, 2005; Sonnenfeld, 2002). However there are also earlier studies examining board performance that offer inclusive results or are contradictory to the aforementioned authors (Korac-Kakabadsee, Kakabadsee, & Kouzmin, 2001). A meta-analysis of 159 studies spanning 40 years by Dalton, Daily, Ellstrand, and Johnson (1998) found that there was no clear relationship between board effectiveness and company performance. Some companies appear to do well with governance models that don't appear to be overly effective and some companies do poorly yet have good governance models in place. Even though studies show mixed results regarding the effects of board governance performance as an organization's performance Chambers (2005) believes boards play an important role if for no other reason than providing controls and checks on management and thereby

mitigating risks. He offers the metaphor of the car: “Cars have brakes so that they can go faster” (p. 31).

Korac-Kakabadsee et al. (2001) suggest most studies on this topic focus on financial performance and ignore other aspects of a company’s performance such as social responsibility measurements. They also argue that perhaps the inconsistency in findings of these various studies is due to a wide variety of variables that are measured and the varying circumstances in which boards operate. They explain that even when the performance criteria in a study appear similar some variables are beyond the control of the board, for example the political environments in countries where companies operate. Cadbury (1997) cautions that the question of the relationship between board performance and organizational performance is a very challenging one to answer due to the complexity of the relationship and the difficulty in defining and isolating the relevant variables. Melvin and Hirt (2005) observe that researchers studying the relationship between board performance and organizational performance face methodological challenges such as a lack of a common definition of governance and of corporate performance as well as difficulties determining which criteria to use to measure performance. However despite these challenges and based on their analysis of studies done between 2000 and 2005 Melvin and Hirt concluded that there is a positive correlation between good governance and good corporate performance. Other surveys overviewed below support this position.

Combes and Watson (2000) found that companies known to have effective boards attracted investors willing to pay a premium because the corporations were perceived to be well governed. In an Australian study a positive relationship was found between board

members skills and corporate performance (Kiel, 2003). In a survey of over 200 large corporations conducted by Mercer Delta and the Center for Effective Organizations, University of Southern California a key finding was that these corporations believed that regular board evaluations were essential to building strong boards (Nadler 2004). A recent study by McIntyre, Murphy and Mitchell (2007) that involved a review of all companies in the Canadian TSE300 Composite Index found a correlation between the board and the company's performance. The study examined elements that contribute to board performance such as experience levels of board members, size of board and length of service on the board and then correlated those with the company's performance. The authors cite several studies that examined board effectiveness noting there is evidence of some correlation of board characteristics with the organization performance.

Acknowledging that there are some studies that don't demonstrate a correlation between effective board performance and organizational performance, more recent studies suggest there is sufficient evidence to believe that good governance practices can contribute to the effectiveness of an organization. Further, from an intuitive point of view it would seem logical that effective boards have a positive influence on the performance of the organizations they oversee. If one accepts this premise then the need for boards to assess their own performance is difficult to argue against.

Board Compliance with Recommendations or Directives to Self Evaluate

For well over a decade there have been ubiquitous calls from governance experts and scholars, governments and regulatory agencies for boards to measure their own performance. Due to the many scandals and missteps by boards which have been well chronicled in the media during the same time period the public has a heightened

awareness of boards. Today the public expects much more accountability from boards (Lawler, Finegold, Benson & Conger, 2002). Given this environment one might expect a high degree of compliance by boards to self evaluate however this is not yet the case. The good news is that incidences of board self evaluations appear to be improving over the past decade.

The 2005 study of Ontario Colleges entitled “Enhancing Governance and Accountability Capacity” found that only 60% of respondents indicated their board formally assessed its performance on an annualized basis (Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 2005). The study noted several strengths of college boards such as the collective expertise, experience and commitment of board members but identified board self evaluation as a significant area needing improvement. This study surveyed board members and senior college staff from the 24 college boards in Ontario and received responses from 197 board members and 68 senior staff who served as resources to the board. Despite the relatively low incidence of self evaluation it does represent an improvement over a similar review done in 2002 by Deloitte/Gowling which is cited in the Ontario Colleges study. The Deloitte/Gowling study of 100 participants who were members of boards from the education, health and arts sectors found that only 23% had a formal board evaluation process.

The Ontario Colleges study also revealed two interesting but perhaps troubling findings. Of the respondents who indicated that their board did not self evaluate only 86% were supportive of introducing board evaluation processes. When given a list of 15 topics to be addressed in a board professional development program the topic of “board

performance evaluation process” (Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 2005, p.63) was ranked a distant last by the respondents.

A 1995 performance review study of Florida community colleges commissioned by the Florida legislature produced similar results to the Ontario study. The study involved 13 of Florida’s 28 community colleges and was modeled from an earlier survey that measured perceptions of higher education board members across the United States and Canada created by Professors Jones and Skolnik from the University of Toronto. The Florida study found that 100% of the boards surveyed felt they should evaluate their own performance but only 53% actually did (Florida State House of Representatives, 1995).

Survey findings regarding board evaluation practices in the private sector appear to mirror the college board experience. A 1996 international survey of large corporations by Korn/Ferry International found that only 25% have a formal board evaluation process in place (Conger, Finegold & Lawler, 1998). Nadler (2004) notes that the results of a Mercer Delta Center for Effective Organizations, University of Southern California survey indicated only 56% of respondents formally evaluated board performance on a regular basis and 76% don’t evaluate individual board members. Further, of those companies that did conduct board evaluations only 16% had developed plans to address any shortcomings discovered as a result of the evaluations. In Britain, Chambers (2005), a professor emeritus, City University, London reports that 52% of UK boards now evaluate individual board members performance compared to 29% in the U.S., 23% in France and only 1% in Germany. The results of a 2007 survey of 350 large companies in Britain may indicate that boards are now paying more attention to the need to evaluate their own performance. Approximately half of the companies surveyed responded. The

results indicate that 97% of the boards responding assess their performance annually and of those 17% opted for an evaluation by an external consultant (Independent Audit Ltd., 2007). These findings continue to demonstrate the need for improvement in board evaluation practices, however, when compared to earlier surveys they show progress is being made. That said boards do face problems when determining the process and instruments to use when considering design and implementation of self evaluation.

Board Evaluation Challenges

Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005) offer a framework for diagnosing board performance issues by providing three common problems listed in the literature and offering a new one of their own. They note that most scholarly analysis of board performance generally focuses on three problem areas. The first problem area identified is group dynamics. If factors such as dysfunctional communications among board members, petty rivalries and/or a few overly domineering board members are present in the board it most likely will result in poor board performance. A lack of engagement by board members is the second problem area. Board members' disengagement is characterized by behaviours such as poor attendance at meetings, poor preparation for meetings and a general lack of knowledge about what is going on in the organization that they govern. The third problem area refers to situations where board members do not have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities as board members. Chait et al. cite their own consultations with 28 consultants who worked with underperforming boards. Nineteen of these consultants believed their client board's problem was a lack of knowledge or confusion about the board's roles and responsibilities.

In addition to the aforementioned three problem areas Chait et al. (2005) propose a new problem area, lack of purpose which they believe may also have some causal relationship to the other problem areas discussed above. In this situation board members may understand what their roles and responsibilities are but don't see value in what they are doing. Board members wonder if they make a difference. Chait et al offer several reasons for board members feeling that they are not adding value. For example, board members may feel a lack of purpose in situations where they join a board because they believe in the organization's mission and values and its strategic goals. However, once on the board they may discover that their time is spent in an oversight capacity and that they simply perform a check and balance function on management. While such oversight is necessary, it hardly is an exciting or inspirational reason to join or remain on a board. The Chait et al. framework may be helpful should a board decide to self evaluate or to review the effectiveness of its current self evaluation practices. This framework and its implications for practice will be discussed further in Chapter V.

The next section will examine some board evaluation policies and practices in Ontario and other jurisdictions including examples of best practices.

Policies and Practices

The Ontario college guidelines (College Compensation and Appointments Council, 2003) are the least prescriptive in terms of what boards should evaluate and what processes they should use compared to all the documents reviewed for the purpose of this research study. The 2005 study by Deloitte on college board governance in Ontario found that "while there was no desire to have a standard that all colleges would follow,

common areas for assessment were viewed as valuable” (Ontario Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, 2005, p.17). The authors of the study recommended, at a minimum, boards assess how well they are fulfilling their key responsibilities. Other “common areas” that the authors suggest boards might consider as they review their performance include the skills and competencies of the governors collectively, the performance of the chair, the effectiveness of board committees, risk management practices and communication practices. The report does suggest that in addition to consulting the guidelines provided by the CCAC boards should look at what Deloitte consider best practice guidelines such as those published by the British Columbia Board Resourcing and Development Office and by the Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) both of which are discussed in the Government and Regulatory Requirements/Expectations section of this chapter.

As noted earlier the OHA guidelines are very comprehensive in terms of what to evaluate, various ways to conduct evaluations and suggestions on taking corrective action when appropriate. For this reason I will discuss their guidelines in more detail regarding recommended practices for board evaluation.

The Ontario Hospital Association (2005) stress that boards are accountable for their own governance. This accountability involves ensuring that the boards’ own structures as well as their policies and procedures enable boards to operate effectively. Areas of governance that effective boards must address through their own policies and actions include recruitment and orientation of new members, board professional development, regular review of the board’s bylaws and policies, annual evaluations of board performance, regular reviews of board committee structures and terms of reference.

The OHA also note that boards, as part of their governance role, must oversee their organizations' risk management policies and processes. This includes protecting against financial risk, legal and liability risks and mission/reputational risk. The board must understand the different types of risks and monitor the organization's operations to ensure they are in compliance with the established risk policies. As part of risk management the board is responsible for ensuring that its members have the skills and experience to perform effectively as a board member. Incumbent with this responsibility is the requirement for board self-evaluation. Specific areas that the OHA recommend should be assessed annually include individual board members performance, collective board performance, board chair performance, and the effectiveness of board meetings, board committees, board retreats and board orientation sessions.

“As part of the board's ongoing responsibility for its own governance a board should consider and implement governance evaluation processes that can contribute to the continuous improvement of board governance” (Ontario Hospital Association, 2005, p. 99). Inherent in this statement is a focus on a formative evaluation model, that is, an evaluation system that recognizes good performance while at the same time identifying variances from performance and addressing those variances in constructive ways. The overarching goal of evaluation is to improve the board's effectiveness in overseeing the organization.

The OHA recommends that the following questions should be addressed for each area that is being evaluated:

What is the purpose of the evaluation?

Who should complete the evaluation?

Will the process be anonymous?

How will the results be shared?

What processes will be established to ensure the results are acted upon?

The OHA also recommends that the evaluation policies, processes and instruments should be periodically reviewed to ensure they are effective. Such reviews should include not only assessing the questions that are being asked in the evaluation instrument but also assessing the effectiveness of improvement plans resulting from evaluations and the ways evaluation results are shared. The OHA provide samples of evaluation questionnaires for boards to assess the board as a whole, the board chair, board committees, and individual board members as well as areas and functions for which the board has responsibility.

Not surprisingly, articles and books by governance experts and scholars addressing good governance practices take similar approaches to board evaluation as found in governance resource manuals such as the OHA's and reviews commissioned by provincial and state governments such as Ontario's 2005 study of college governance. In stating his case for empowered boards Lorsch (1995) notes that a necessary action of well performing boards is periodic and regular assessment of their own performance. Like other scholars on this topic he recommends, at a minimum, a regular review of the board and CEO relationship, the board understanding and monitoring of the organizations annual and long term goals, and the effectiveness of board committees as well as their contribution to the organization's success. Dowdy (1996), in her writing on college trustees' roles and responsibilities, calls for annual board assessments including

individual member evaluation. She includes a sample evaluation form for boards to consider adapting to fit their own circumstances. Carver (1997) calls for regular board self assessment as frequently as every meeting. Schwartz (2001) recommends that boards should state expectations of their individual board members and measure these annually through self administered surveys. Nadler (2004) believes boards must develop rigorous evaluation processes and states: “Self-assessment is no cursory glance in the mirror but rather an exhaustive culling of quantitative and qualitative data through surveys, confidential interviews and facilitated group discussions” (p. 2). He calls for regular evaluations of both the board as a whole and individual board members. He also provides examples of detailed measurement tools to assist boards in evaluating their own performance and then take steps to address areas requiring improvement. In their Principles of Corporate Governance the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2005) note that a key responsibility of the board is to assess the effectiveness of the organization’s governance practices and taking corrective action as needed. Further, the OECD note there is a growing expectation by governments around the world for boards to publicly disclose their governance practices including evaluation processes.

Edwards (2003) in her study of New Zealand tertiary education governance also recommends annual assessments of boards and individual members as well as the creation of an association of board chairs with a secretariat. Part of the association roles would be to create board orientation and professional development programs. The New Zealand association would be comparable to the OHA, the CCAC in Ontario and associations in other jurisdictions but with one significant difference. Edwards goes an

extra step by calling for the direct involvement of the association in the evaluation of each institution's board and their individual members. While the Ontario and British Columbia guidelines are silent on the use of outside consultants to assist boards in their evaluations, the California guidelines suggest it as an option and the Florida report recommends an external assessment every three years but none of them suggest that a higher education association body be directly involved in board evaluation. A study by Chait, Holland & Taylor (1996) offers support for external reviews of board performance at least periodically. In their survey involving 108 trustees and college presidents from 22 colleges in the U.S., they concluded that performance reviews conducted by boards themselves were of questionable validity in terms of the measurement accuracy of the boards' actual performance. However, they also concluded that these types of reviews still had value as they provided a forum for boards to discuss their effectiveness, identify developmental gaps and possible ways to address the gaps.

In what some may consider a strongly worded or perhaps somewhat controversial suggestion, Edwards (2003) recommends the board chair take action to have individual board members removed if they are underperforming and refuse to take professional development to remediate their performance gaps. She expects the board chair to demonstrate more accountability by taking responsibility for board assessment and individual board member performance reviews. Edward's views on the importance of board chair and individual member performance are supported by Kezar and Eckel (2004) in their review of modern day governance challenges.

Dowdy (1996) notes that individual board member evaluation is "a sensitive point" but that boards must accept this responsibility as "it seems natural that another important

component in the assessment process is trustee self evaluation” (p. 27). Nadler (2004) also strongly advocates for evaluations of individual members taking a formative approach initially but realizing sometimes a summative approach, that is, removal of a board member may be required. He makes a point on the importance of recruiting competent board members and notes 81% of companies in his recent survey of 200 large companies are reporting that this has become a challenge. Part of a board’s self evaluation should include an assessment of each board members knowledge, skills, and experience and then to align those with the activities of the organization for which board involvement or knowledge is required. The board should be looked at as a team whose members have a variety of talents that are brought together to achieve a goal which, in this case, is ensuring the long term success of the organization they oversee. For example college boards generally recruit so that expertise in areas such as financial, information technology, industrial sectors, diversity and advocacy are present on the board.

Evaluation Frameworks

In this section two governance evaluation frameworks will be overviewed. When considered together these frameworks are quite instructive for boards wishing to effectively evaluate their own performance. The first framework focuses on what boards need to evaluate and the second focuses more on the evaluation process.

Chait et al. (1996) developed a board competency framework which could serve as a guide for a board to use when deciding what to evaluate regarding its own performance. They identified 6 board competencies they termed as “dimensions of effective trusteeship”. These competency areas are:

Contextual Dimension – this refers to board members having an understanding of the organization’s values and culture.

Educational Dimension – board members are expected to have an understanding of the work of the organization and the board’s roles and responsibilities.

Interpersonal Dimension – the board is expected to create an environment of trust where members can constructively debate issues respecting sometimes divergent points of view but recognizing collectively they must act in the best interest of the organization.

Analytical Dimension – the board is aware that issues before it are complex and require thoughtful, constructive debate where various points of view are recognized and synthesized.

Political Dimension – board members recognize their responsibility to nurture healthy relationships with the various stakeholders that the organization serves or with whom they interact.

Strategic Dimension – the board ensures that the organization has a strategic vision and strategies to achieve that vision.

Kiel and Nicholson (2005) propose a board evaluation framework that addresses seven key decisions boards should make when looking at how they determine their performance evaluation process. The framework poses seven questions related to the key decisions. The questions were developed based on Kiel and Nicholson’s analysis of why boards experience performance issues. They note boards that develop evaluation processes based on these questions are more likely to diagnose problem areas and remediate them before they become a crisis but they also caution that boards should not rely solely on evaluations to resolve all board problems.

In employing this framework all seven questions must be asked but boards have the freedom to determine how they will be answered and in what depth depending on the circumstances. For example, the board may conduct the evaluation themselves using the framework or they may hire an external consultant who will instruct them to use the framework. The seven questions are:

- 1) What are the objectives? The board must determine what it wants to achieve through an evaluation process.
- 2) Who will be evaluated? Based on the answers to the objectives question the board must determine whose performance will be assessed. In doing so the board should weigh the costs against the benefits and focus on evaluating those who most closely impact the evaluation objectives.
- 3) What will be evaluated? This step involves the board breaking down the objectives into a set of specific topics to be measured. For each objective the board needs to consider what are the potential influences or causal factors affecting that objective.
- 4) Who will be asked? In determining who is asked to give input the board must consider the answers to the first three questions. Where possible and when appropriate the board should balance external sources of information with their own internal board sources. For example, assessing board interpersonal dynamics may be addressed through the input of the board members themselves where as assessing community relations would be more appropriately measured by asking community stakeholders.

- 5) What techniques will be used? Again, based on the objectives of the evaluation the board should decide methods and instruments to use. Consideration should be given to quantitative and qualitative approaches or a combination of both depending on what is being measured.
- 6) Who will do the evaluation? The board must choose the best person or body to conduct the evaluation. Depending on the situation and the objectives, the board might select the chairperson, appoint an evaluation committee or hire an outside consultant.
- 7) What do you do with the results? The board needs to decide to whom they will communicate the results. Generally the evaluation findings should always be discussed with the board as a whole but there are also circumstances such as individual board member results that are not shared beyond the Chair and the individual member. Other circumstances may include the board assessing external relationships in which case the evaluation results should be shared with key external stakeholders.

Boards interested in examining various evaluation processes and instruments that are available may find it helpful to use both frameworks to develop an evaluation approach that best meets their needs. The frameworks in combination with the board's roles and responsibilities documents may assist boards to determine the key performance areas to review and the processes and evaluation tools to employ. While there are challenges in developing empirically valid measurements of the various board activities (Chait et al. 1996) scholars suggest that any assessment is valuable if it leads to the board having discussions of their performance and how to improve it (Kiel & Nicholson 2005) .

Summary

An overview of the literature related to the evaluation of board governance was presented by first looking at governance definitions and principles and the roles of boards. There is no universally accepted definition of governance however there are several common elements in each of the definitions that were examined. My literature review also found there was much more in common than there were differences when examining writings on governance principles and expected roles. A classification model of board types by Nadler and two perspectives on governance roles by Chait et al. (2005) and McIntyre et al. (2007) were discussed.

A brief review of the Ontario college board development and structure was presented to give an understanding of the parameters within which these boards function. The discussion then turned to an examination of the rationale for board evaluation and a review of board evaluation compliance rates. The chapter concluded with a review of board evaluation policies and best practices including a discussion of two board evaluation frameworks.

A case for board evaluation was made by presenting numerous reasons why boards must evaluate based on the works of governance scholars and experts. Suggestions at a macro level as to what boards should evaluate and how they should evaluate were presented. Specific tools on evaluation were not presented as I subscribe to the belief espoused by many experts that there is no one prescriptive way for boards to evaluate themselves. Rather, boards should consider evaluation frameworks such as those proposed by Kiel and Nicholson (2005) and customize their evaluation processes based on their own individual needs and circumstances. The important message is that in order

to be effective boards must assess their own performance and address any identified gaps. Kezar & Eckel (2004) note that there are few major studies on governance with some exceptions such as Birnbaum's work in the 1980's and Gumpert's work in the 1990's. Further, they note that scholarly research on governance focused mainly on structural theories with very little being written on ways of improving governance. McIntyre et al (2007) call for more qualitative type studies that involve interviewing board members to hear their personal opinions on board governance practices including evaluation while Minichilli et al (2007) recommend further research into "why and under what circumstances boards adopt evaluation" (p. 620). My research study pursued those recommendations by surveying all Ontario college boards and then conducting interviews with members of boards that do evaluate and members of boards that don't.

Chapter III Research Design and Methodology

Introduction and Theoretical Underpinnings

Document collection, surveys and interviews were the data collection methods employed to study the perceptions and practices of Ontario college board members. In this chapter a brief overview of the theoretical underpinnings of the research design and methods employed in this study will be presented. Descriptions of the population that was studied are discussed as well as specific descriptions of the process used in each phase of this research study.

According to Merriam (1998) and Neuman (2002) there are three major approaches to educational research and social science research: positivism, interpretive social science and critical social science. Methods from positivism and interpretative social science were employed in this study of the perceptions and practices of Ontario college boards regarding board self evaluation. Neuman (2002) describes positivism as the foundation of quantitative research. It is usually associated with the natural sciences but is also widely used in the social sciences. A common method used by quantitative researchers is surveys (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). Unlike qualitative researchers who use an inductive approach, quantitative researchers following the positivist approach generally take a deductive route. Positivism calls for the researcher to remain neutral and detached from the subjects and the environment being studied. This detachment may inhibit a deeper understanding of the subjects or issues being studied (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Pike & Agnew, 1991). To balance this possible disadvantage this study also employed qualitative research methods.

Interpretative social science, a principal research approach used in qualitative studies has several varieties or types (Merriam, 1998; Neuman, 2002) including phenomenology, elements of which were used in this study. Phenomenology is concerned with how people construct their own reality based on their interpretations of their own experiences and recognizes that, to better understand people, their experiences and perspectives we must seek their point of view directly (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Johnson & Christensen, 2004; Merriam, 1998). According to Johnson & Christensen, interviews of research subjects that are representative of the population being studied and relevant document analysis are commonly accepted methods when taking a phenomenological approach. Since the focus of this study was to describe and understand more fully the perceptions and practices of board members with respect to board self evaluation a mixed methodology approach combining quantitative and qualitative methods was chosen.

Mixed methodology design is a common and acceptable research practice that enables the researcher to develop a deeper understanding of the topic or phenomenon being studied than is the case when employing a single method (Morgan, 1997; Neuman 2002). This study was primarily descriptive, that is seeking to discover “what is”, but it also had elements of causal relationship design (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2006) as I sought to discover reasons why some college boards self evaluate while others do not. Analysis of the data collected from surveys, interviews and board documents was used to address the main research question about the perceptions and practices of Ontario College boards regarding self evaluation. By triangulating the data, that is using “...a variety of methods, techniques, tools and theories to arrive at a closer approximation of the truth” (Smith,

1991, p.697), I was able to counterbalance any weakness in any one particular method or tool and enhance the validity of the study (Yin, 2002).

A conceptual framework with respect to board competencies developed by Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) was used to help analyze the written responses to the survey (Appendix C) and the interview questions (Appendix G) that dealt specifically with why boards conduct or don't conduct self evaluation. Chait et al. suggest that boards may use this framework to help design their self evaluation process and instruments. The framework which is described in Chapters II and IV proposes that there are six key competency dimensions or areas that boards should consider when examining the work of the board, recruiting new members and evaluating the board's and board member performance.

Data Collection

Data was collected using three methods: surveys, interviews and requests for board documents related to board self evaluation. This study complied with the protocols of University of Toronto's Ethics Review Office. All letters, forms, and questions used in this study were submitted to and approved by the Ethics Review Office before the research commenced.

There are twenty four public colleges in Ontario of which twenty two are Anglophone and two are Francophone and each is governed by a board. The colleges range in size from 1,200 full time students to over 18,000 and are located in urban centres of various sizes throughout Ontario. Most have satellite campuses that service smaller centres and rural or northern geographic areas. The college boards range in size from 14 members to 18. All Anglophone college boards were participants in the document

collection phase and all, with the exception of my college, were invited to participate in the survey phase of the study.

My college was not used in the survey or interview data collection phases so that any possible bias that may have occurred due to my close relationship with those board members and my participation in developing the board's evaluation policies and instruments was avoided. I did include my college in the document collection phase of this study so that I could determine the percentage of Ontario colleges that self evaluate based on existing board self evaluation policies and/or instruments.

The Francophone colleges were not part of the document collection or survey phases, however the presidents of the two Francophone colleges were interviewed by me to determine whether or not their boards practiced self evaluation and, if so, what policies and/or instruments they had in place. The data from these interviews along with the document collection data analysis allowed me to calculate, for the whole Ontario college system as demonstrated by the presence of supporting documents, the number of Ontario colleges that practice self evaluation as of this 2008 study. I was then able to do a comparison with the number of Ontario college boards that reported they self evaluated in the 2005 Deloitte Study.

Pre-Test Phase

My college's board was used to pilot the survey and the interview questions. Gall, Gall and Borg (2006) strongly recommend that survey questionnaire and interview questions are pre-tested with a group of subjects that have similar characteristics as those of the target population being studied. A thorough pretest that includes opportunity for respondents to comment on the clarity of the questions helps to ensure there is little or no

ambiguity in the instructions or questions. Gall et al. also point out two other advantages of pre-testing. It allows the researcher an opportunity to analyze the pre-test results to ascertain whether the planned methods for data collection and analysis are appropriate. Another advantage is that the pre-test results may reveal a need to add questions. For example, if a particular question yields very divergent responses it may require that additional questions are constructed to determine the reasons for the divergence. I also had a survey design expert review my survey questionnaire before I used it.

The survey pre-test involved 12 members of my college board and the interview pre-test involved 4 members. Feedback on the survey resulted in a revision to the instructions on how to complete the survey. To add more clarity, the instructions in the definitions section of page one of the survey (Appendix C) were amended by adding the following statement: "Based on these definitions, please select the response that you believe most closely matches your board's self evaluation practices when answering the question on your board's self evaluation practices." Pre-test respondents suggested the addition of this statement gave greater direction in situations where a survey respondent may feel his/her board practices don't exactly align with the given definitions. No changes were made to the actual survey questions.

The pre-test interviews were conducted by phone to simulate as closely as possible the actual interview method that would be employed in the study. The pre-test of the interview questions resulted in no changes to the instructions or the questions. The results from the pre test survey and interviews appeared to indicate that the survey and interview questions would enable the data collection necessary to answer the major research question and subsidiary questions.

Identification Coding of Data Sources

A record keeping system was established to identify the source of the data and to help organize the data as it was collected. Steps were taken to ensure the confidentiality of the survey and interview data and the anonymity of the respondents and their colleges. While board policy documents are in the public domain I did recognize that college boards, especially those who responded that they did not self evaluate during the document collection phase, may not want to be identified in my research. Hence I took steps to protect their identity when presenting the results as I had committed in all my communications that no college would be identified and all responses were confidential. Specific colleges or respondents, regardless of their individual practices or beliefs, are not identified in the research findings or the discussion and conclusions.

In order to track the source of data, analyze it and report the results, while at the same preserving the anonymity of the source, I assigned an identification code to each source of data. Colleges were randomly assigned a letter of the alphabet between A and X and classified as either a board that self evaluated (SE) or a board that does not (NE). Board documents were labeled with an alpha code that represented the college that provided the document. Board members that participated in the survey phase of the study and entered remarks in the comment section were also assigned a code for the purpose of analysis and reporting. Each was assigned the alpha code of their respective college then coded “Ex” if the participant was an external board member or “In” if the participant was an internal board member and finally each was assigned a number to separately identify each participant that served on the same college board. For example, two participants

that were external members and came from the same college that self evaluated were coded College B SE Ex1 and College B SE Ex2.

For the interview data I selected two boards that self evaluated and two that did not. I assigned codes based on the college board's self evaluation practice and the interview participant's classification as either an external or internal member of the board. The two college boards in the interview phase that I classified as boards that formally self evaluated were coded as 'SE' and given the number 1 or 2 to differentiate them. The two college boards that I classified as not self evaluating were "NE" and also given the number 1 or 2. For example, the second interviewee who was an external board member from the second self evaluating subject board was coded SE2 Ex2.

The code keys were kept on my home computer hard drive that was password protected. A printed copy of the code keys was also kept along with other data in a locked file cabinet in my home office.

Document Collection Phase

The President and the Board Office of each Anglophone public college in Ontario, with the exception of the college where I am employed, were contacted via email (Appendix A) and requested to discuss participation in this study with their Board Chair. The purpose of my research was explained as well as my plans for a survey phase involving all colleges and an interview phase involving a smaller number of colleges. I requested that each Board Office send me any board policies and instruments related to self evaluation or to advise me if their board did not self evaluate. These documents are in the public domain and some colleges have their policies posted on their websites. I received responses from each of the colleges. The initial email also included a letter of

invitation to complete a survey and background information (Appendix B) to be sent to board members if the Chair agreed to participate.

As the board documents at the Francophone colleges are in French I decided to contact the presidents of the two Francophone colleges in person at separate times to determine if I could acquire some data that would assist me in calculating the number of Ontario college boards that self evaluate. I explained the purpose of my research and that while I would not be surveying their board members I would like to include the boards in the data related to calculating the percentage of Ontario colleges that do practice self evaluation. I also explained their participation was voluntary, that any information they gave me was confidential and that their college would not be identified in the report of the research findings. Both agreed to be interviewed. I then asked if their college boards engaged in board self evaluation and, if so, to describe the process they used. I recorded this information in handwritten notes for later reference. This information from the Francophone colleges was used solely for the calculation of the percentage of Ontario college boards that self evaluate. As stated earlier my college was also included in this calculation in order to give a complete picture of how many colleges self evaluate based on actual board policies and/or self evaluation instruments.

The document collection partially addressed the main research question, specifically board evaluation “practices” element of the question. It directly addressed subsidiary questions 1(a) concerning the self evaluation policies and methods of boards, 1(b) that dealt with the number of boards that formally self evaluate, and 1(c) that compared this study’s survey data to the data in the 2005 Deloitte Study of Ontario College Boards. Data from the document collection phase was also used to answer

question seven that concerned comparing college board practices with the recommendations found in the literature. The document data also helped validate the survey and interview results related to the research questions concerning board self evaluation practices.

Survey Phase

The survey (Appendix C) addressed the main research question and all the subsidiary research questions with the exception of question 1(a) which dealt with college board self evaluation policies, procedures and instruments currently in use and question 6(b) which asked for suggestions on how to improve current self evaluation practices. The data collected from the survey did not directly answer question seven but was used along with the document collection and interview data to do a comparison of the actual Ontario college boards self evaluation perceptions and practices to the findings and recommendations found in the literature.

The survey began with an introductory section that explained the purpose of the research and its significance, provided assurances regarding the confidentiality of the respondents, noted participation was voluntary and stated the definitions related to board self evaluation that were to be referenced when completing the survey. The questionnaire section of the survey consisted primarily of a set of statements that required a response on a Likert-type scale using a strongly agree, agree, disagree, strongly disagree along with no opinion and not applicable options. Gall, Gall and Borg (2006) and Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) note that in descriptive studies and/or studies that examine practices of groups the use of surveys employing Likert-type response scales is a common and accepted practice. Each item of the survey was designed to specifically collect data that

helped answer the research questions. The questionnaire section of the survey also had multiple choice predetermined response options and an “other comments” option to address the research questions that were not as easily answered using a Likert-type scale as in survey question eight which asked for suggestions regarding implementing evaluation practices. To collect data for this question, the respondents selected from a list of possible answers such as professional development, hiring external consultant, part of annual board planning cycle and so on. Survey question nine regarding non support for board self evaluation involved any respondents answering that question to write their own response as opposed to selecting from pre-determined responses. The survey concluded with a comment section to provide respondents an opportunity to note any additional information that they weren’t able to provide because the predetermined response options didn’t specifically address the answer they wished to provide. The survey was placed on a web based survey design site with a link only accessible to those to whom the survey link was sent.

As noted in the document collection section of this chapter a letter of invitation and information for board members (Appendix B) that included the survey questionnaire web link was sent via email to each Anglophone College Board Office and President. The President was asked to discuss with the Board Chair my request to participate in the research study and, if the Chair approved, distribute the letter of invitation to board members at their college. The letter explained the purpose of the research and its significance as well as providing assurances regarding the confidentiality of the respondents. An offer to share the collective results and findings of the study was also made.

One college indicated that their Ethics Review Committee would have to review my research request. Following their review, the Ethics Review Committee from that college required me to add that my study had been approved by them when sending my letter of invitation to their board members. I provided a revised letter to the Committee that simply added a statement indicating approval by the college's Ethics Review Committee and was then given approval to proceed.

One college declined to participate in the survey. The President of this college explained that the Board did not conduct self evaluation at this time. The President indicated that, in discussion with the Board Chair, they planned at some time in the future to consider board self evaluation but had a full agenda for the coming year from which they did not want to deviate. The President also stated that participation in my research study would cause the Board to engage in a discussion of self evaluation before the Chair and the President were prepared to have such a discussion. They wanted to research best practices and didn't have time to do it in the coming year. I did offer to share information from my literature review however my offer was declined with the rationale that the Board agenda for this year had been set. While disappointing that one college did not participate in the survey twenty colleges did which provided enough data to answer the research questions.

The survey was designed so that I could track the responses from individual colleges but I could not identify individual respondents. This allowed me to follow up with colleges where the response rate was low while at the same time respecting the anonymity of individual respondents. Three weeks after the initial e-mail invitation to participate in the survey a follow up request via e-mail was made to each president to

update them on their college's board survey participation rate to date and to request that they send a follow up reminder to their board members encouraging them to consider completing the survey. Survey participation increased during the week that followed this request. A second follow up e-mail was made two weeks later to colleges that had less than five respondents. Again this resulted in more participation in the week immediately following the request. The survey site was closed two weeks after the third request was made as no responses were received in the second week and there were enough responses that provided sufficient data to begin data analysis and address the research questions.

Twenty college boards participated in the survey with a total board member population of 327. The number of respondents was 108 with 105 actually completing the whole survey. The three respondents who did not complete the survey were excluded from the results because each exited the survey before answering any of the questions on the perceptions and practices of board members. The number of respondents from each college ranged from 2 to 8.

Interview Phase

The next phase of the data collection involved interviews with board members from a representative sample of the Ontario college boards. The interview process allowed a deeper probing and a richer understanding of the perceptions and practices of board members than the survey data alone provided. Gall, Gall and Borg (2006) and Merriam (1998) classify research interviews into three types: structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews consist of a series of close ended questions that can be answered yes or no or by a short response, for example, "What is your length of service on the college board?" Semi-structured interviews may begin with a short series

of structured questions but move to a series of open ended questions allowing the respondent to provide answers of more depth and breadth (Judd, Smith & Kidder, 1991; Merriam, 1998). In this study, a semi-structured interview method was employed. According to Gall et al, semi-structured interviews are commonly used and very appropriate in educational research as they provide a balance of objectivity and depth. Employing such techniques gives the interviewer the opportunity to gain a thorough understanding of the respondent's beliefs and the rationale behind the respondent's beliefs (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006).

The interview questions (Appendix G) were composed based on readings from the literature review and feedback from faculty advisors. The interview questions collectively addressed the main research question and as well addressed subsidiary questions with the exception of 1(c) which dealt with comparing this study's survey results to the Deloitte Study. As noted earlier the principal method to address question 1(b) was to gather and review relevant board documents from each of the colleges. Subsidiary question 1(d) regarding the board member's perceptions of the effectiveness of their board's current self evaluation practices was partially addressed by the interviews of participants from self evaluating boards but the survey provided the main source of data for this question.

Selection of Interview Sites & Participants

The letter of invitation and information (Appendix B) for the survey that was sent to each board member indicated that some boards would be selected for follow up interviews and that participation would be voluntary. Based on the initial survey results and analysis of the board documents received, two college boards that formally self

evaluate and two college boards that don't were selected for interviews. In addition to a board's self evaluation practice the size of the college and its geographic location were also used as a criteria in order to better represent the diverse characteristics of Ontario colleges. Given the size of the Ontario college system and the unique characteristics of each of the colleges the following descriptions are purposefully very general in order to protect the identify of each of the colleges that participated in the interview phase.

The two "self evaluating" college boards were selected from the colleges that, in the document collection phase, indicated they did practice self evaluation and based on my analysis of their policies and instruments and their responses to the survey were categorized by me as practicing formal board self evaluation. The first self evaluating subject board's college, coded SE1, is located in a medium size urban centre in southern Ontario and has a student population over 6,000. The second subject board's college, coded SE2, has a student population over 2,500 and is located in a medium size urban centre in northern Ontario that services a large geographic area.

The two "non-evaluating" college boards were selected from the colleges that had indicated in the document collection phase that they didn't practice formal self evaluation and had participated in the survey phase. The first non-evaluating subject board's college, coded NE1, is located in a large urban centre in southern Ontario and has a full time student population over 10,000 students. The second subject board's college, coded NE2, is located in a small urban centre in southern Ontario that services a large rural area and has a full time student population between 3,000 and 6,000.

The President of each selected college was requested via e-mail to ask their Board Chair if he/she was interested in participating and, if so, to send an attached letter of

invitation (Appendix D) to all board members. The letter explained the purpose of the research and the participant's rights. If a board member was interested he/she was directed to e-mail me. To allow a balanced representation of participants I made the selection of the participants from those who responded based on the following criteria. The Board Chairs of each of the selected four colleges were selected for interviews. The rest of the interview participants were selected to provide a balanced representation of the following general characteristics of board members: external and internal members, gender, and length of service on the board. In addition to the board chair, two board members at each of the four colleges were selected for interviews. Those not selected were sent an email in which I thanked them for their interest and advised them that enough volunteers had come forward and that their participation was not required.

An email with a letter attachment (Appendix E) explaining the purpose of the study, definition of terms used, the interview process, and confidentiality terms as well as consent forms (Appendix F) was sent to each participant selected for an interview. Consent forms were either emailed or faxed back to me. As described earlier in this chapter each interview participant was assigned a college code and an alpha numeric code to protect their anonymity and ensure the confidentiality of their responses. Code assignment and descriptions of each participant are provided in Table 1 of Chapter IV.

Given the divergent geographic locations and schedules of the subjects, all interviews were conducted by phone at a time convenient for the subject. To lessen the possibility of any misunderstanding of the questions I reviewed the purpose of research and the definition of terms used which, as noted earlier, were provided to the participant as part of the process seeking his/her consent to be part of the study. The interview

process provided me an opportunity to explore more deeply the perceptions and practices of board members and a forum to explore the reasons that board members had regarding particular beliefs and/or practices related to board evaluation. In a few cases I also asked additional questions in order to get clarification on a particular answer or to encourage the respondent to elaborate further in order to fully answer the question. Such technique is permissible and commonly used with the condition that the interviewer does not overly lead or influence the participant (Bogdan & Biklen, 2006; Merriam, 1998). The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the subject. For the purposes of data analysis the interviews were transcribed by me using voice recognition software.

Data Analysis

This study employed both quantitative methods (survey) and qualitative (documents collection, survey comments, and interviews). Survey results were sorted and analyzed using a survey software package that provided basic statistical calculations. The software calculated the number of responses, the number that skipped a particular question and, depending on the question, the percentages of various response options. The data from the survey provided information about board members regarding:

- i) whether they were internal (faculty, staff, students) or external representatives
- ii) length of service
- iii) college they represented
- iv) their board's self evaluation practice
- v) their personal views on board self evaluation practices
- vi) their personal views on why boards should or should not evaluate
- vii) their personal views on what would assist boards to evaluate

Qualitative data analysis involves organizing the data into categories on the basis of themes, concepts, behaviours, or similar features so that the data can be better understood and explained and new concepts and/or clarifications can be developed (Neuman, 1991). The formal analysis of the data involved a coding practice developed by Strauss (1987) that requires at least three reviews of each piece of data. In each review the coding system is more clearly defined allowing a better articulation of patterns in the data and relationships among the patterns.

In the first review known as open coding (Corbin & Strauss, 2008; Strauss, 1987) the data from the three data collection phases was reviewed and matched against the relevant research questions. The data was searched for critical terms, or themes which related to the research questions posed. Key words, phrases and actions found in the data were marked using a highlighter. Words or phrases that showed a pattern of repeated occurrence among or within the data sources were underlined. Initial codes or themes based on the research questions were assigned by writing labeling words on the data sheets beside the appropriate words, phrases or actions. The final step in this first review was examining the data for any possible contraindications within or across the three data collection sources.

In the second review, known as axial coding (Corbin & Strauss; Strauss), my focus was on the initial set of codes, themes and notes that were developed during open-coding. I used the Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Framework to assist me with this second review. I organized the codes, themes and notes using the Framework by mapping my initial coding of the data against the competency categories (Dimensions) within the Framework. Any initial codes or themes that didn't fit the Framework were

labeled by me with short explanatory notes to enable reporting in Chapter IV and discussion in Chapter V. The data was examined for similarities and differences among the three data collection sources and for comparison with the relevant findings in the literature. During this examination I again looked for any contraindications in the data and found none. According to Strauss the purpose of the second review is to form an “axis” of key concepts on which to build answers to the research questions along with supporting evidence. This process involved triangulation where data from a variety of sources is collated for the purposes of addressing the research question, determining consistency among the data, and considering areas that may require further investigation (Smith, 1991). Triangulation also enhances the validity and reliability of the research findings (Neuman, 2002; Pyke & Agnew, 1991; Yin, 2002).

The third review of the data called selective coding (Strauss, 1987) involved a complete review of the initial findings and data coding done in the open coding as well as the findings and conclusions that I formulated in the axis coding session. At this point my task was to examine the data and my notes more “critically” to help ensure I had addressed the research questions and that I had not overlooked any relevant data or missed an emerging theme. This third review actually involved a few perusals of the data where the themes became more sharply focused and the coding and mapping was verified through on-going triangulation. The purpose of this third review is to lessen the chance that the researcher has missed a key finding or misinterpreted the data.

By synthesizing the responses to the subsidiary questions a response to the main research question was formulated. Suggestions based on the participant’s responses and

the literature were developed regarding how to encourage boards to implement self evaluation and how to improve existing board self evaluation practices.

Three additional areas of interest emerged during the data analysis. The survey software allowed me to isolate answers based on respondents' major characteristics. I was able to segregate the participants' as follows: internal and external board members, self evaluating and non-self evaluating board members, and formal self evaluation board members and informal self evaluation board members.

When first reviewing the survey data and considering the criteria for selecting interview participants it occurred to me that among the various characteristics of board members a major defining characteristic was the way one can become a board member. As noted in Chapter Two there are two primary categories of board members, external and internal, and the way members for each category is selected is markedly different. External representatives, that is members who are not in the college employ and represent various sectors of the community, are generally recruited by a board's nomination committee, vetted by the full board and then a request for appointment along with supporting rationale is sent by the board to the College Compensation and Appointments Council (CCAC). The CCAC reviews the board's nomination process and rationale for the board request and decides whether or not to approve the appointment. Internal board members consist of a representative from the following four "internal" college constituencies: students, faculty, support staff, and administrative employees. The internal board members are elected by their respective constituent's group and then appointed to the board as a result of the election process.

I decided to determine if there were any observable differences in the survey responses of external versus internal board members. My rationale is that the two groups differ with respect to the selection and appointment process as well as their knowledge and experiences regarding the college and therefore the perspectives they bring to the board may be different. Hence, I thought it would be interesting and informative to determine during the analysis of the data whether there were any differences in the perceptions of external board members versus internal with respect to board self evaluation.

I also thought that it may be informative to see if there were any observable differences in survey responses of participants who are members of self evaluating boards versus those who serve on non-self evaluating boards as well as formal self evaluating board members and informal self evaluation board members. If there were any differences I thought it may help us better understand why some boards do self evaluate and some don't. There were only three areas of observable difference in the responses:

- i. how members of boards who conduct formal and informal self evaluation rated the effectiveness of their board's self evaluation process
- ii. reasons to self evaluate by self evaluating board members versus non-self evaluating
- iii. some internal members views on the Board/President relationship

These differences are reported in Chapter IV and discussed Chapter V.

Limitations of the Study

The principal limitations relate to the generalizations of the findings. While the survey included 20 of the 24 colleges and relevant documents were analyzed from all 24 colleges, the interview sample size was small when compared to the total population.

Some may argue that the data and resultant findings from the interviews have limited generalization to the Ontario college system. Since the study is directed at Ontario college boards whose selection methods for members may differ from college boards in other jurisdictions as well as not-for-profit boards in general it will be left to interested readers to determine what application, if any, the findings and suggestions have to their particular circumstances.

This study did not evaluate the effectiveness of boards or the effectiveness of any evaluation process and instruments they are using. While the study did take into account the views of board members regarding factors contributing to boards conducting self-evaluation and offer suggestions to improve evaluation practices, it did not offer or recommend specific evaluation models or instruments. While not expected, given the assurances to participants related to confidentiality and anonymity and not detected during the analysis of the results, there was a possibility of validity issues of some responses if a participant felt embarrassed about their board's evaluation practices or lack thereof. Lastly, there was the possibility of some bias by the researcher although this should have been offset by the use of the mixed methodology design, triangulation methods and an acute awareness of my role as an objective observer and data collector.

Summary

By using both quantitative (survey) and qualitative (interviews and document analysis) methods this study benefited from the advantages of both major research types while offsetting the disadvantages of each. The survey provided a large amount of readily quantifiable data plus narrative data while the interviews and document analysis

allowed a more in-depth exploration of the perception and practices of the boards. Since qualitative researchers are concerned that their research is an accurate reflection of what is happening, they advocate triangulation as a means of improving validity and reliability of their findings (Neuman, 2002; Pyke & Agnew, 1991; Yin, 2002). Triangulation is “the use of a variety of methods, techniques, tools and theories to arrive at a closer approximation of the truth” (Smith, 1991, p. 697). Each research method has inherent strengths and weaknesses. By using a combination of methods a counterbalance is provided for the weakness of each method. In this study using surveys, interviews, and document analysis and triangulating the data collected from each of these methods allowed me “to strengthen the confirmability and generalization of the results” (p. 697).

Chapter IV: The Findings

As stated in Chapter One the main purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and practices of Ontario board members with respect to board self evaluation. The three methods of investigation were document collection, survey questionnaire and interviews. The focus of this chapter is to present the results of the research. In Chapter Five I will analyze and discuss the findings and their possible implications.

This chapter is organized into three main sections. First, descriptions of the sources of the data for each of the research methods will be presented. Second, the findings from each of the research methods will be presented organized in order of the research questions that were posed in Chapter One. Finally, this chapter will close with a summary of the findings that will serve as a springboard to Chapter Five where an in depth analysis and discussion of the findings will be presented.

For the benefit of the reader the research questions are:

Main Question:

What are the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college boards regarding the board self evaluation?

Subsidiary Questions:

1. a) What are the policies, procedures and instruments used by Ontario boards to formally evaluate their performance?
- b) How many Ontario boards formally evaluate their own performance?
- c) How does this study's survey results compare to the 2005 Deloitte Study?

- d) How would board members rate the effectiveness of their current board evaluation practices?
2. What are the beliefs of college board members regarding evaluating:
 - a) the performance of the board as a whole?
 - b) the performance of individual board members?
 3. What are the beliefs of college board members regarding a common set of board evaluation processes and tools versus having the autonomy to develop and implement their own criteria?
 4. What are board members' beliefs regarding reporting publicly on their board's
 - a) evaluation processes and b) evaluation results?
 5. Why do some college boards evaluate their own performance and some do not?
 6. What do college board members believe would be beneficial to assist them to:
 - a) implement board self-evaluation?
 - b) improve current board self evaluation practice?
 7. How do the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college board members compare with results and recommendations found in the literature regarding board self evaluation?

The Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Framework will be referenced in helping to code and ground the participant's responses, specifically the written survey comments and the interview comments, to a conceptual framework. This model consists of six dimensions which are:

Contextual Dimension – this refers to board members having an understanding of the organization's purpose, values and culture. Board members must have to go beyond their

own individual areas of expertise or interest, and seek to understand the whole organization and the environment in which it operates.

Educational Dimension – board members are expected to have an understanding of the work of the organization and the board’s roles and responsibilities. They should be involved in regular professional development and should ensure there are processes in place that keep them current about the various operations of the organization. Board members should seek feedback on the board’s performance with a view to continuously improve.

Interpersonal Dimension – the board is expected to create an environment of trust where members can constructively debate issues respecting sometimes divergent points of view but recognizing collectively they must act in the best interest of the organization. Board members encourage group decision making and teamwork based on a shared purpose and a culture of openness, transparency and respect.

Analytical Dimension – the board is aware that issues before it are complex and require thoughtful, constructive debate where various points of view are recognized and synthesized. When debating issues board members need to balance any passion they may hold for a particular issue with objectivity and a view of what’s best for the whole organization.

Political Dimension – board members recognize their responsibility to nurture healthy relationships with the various stakeholders the organization serves or with whom they interact. Board members need to ensure regular consultations with all the constituencies (both internal and external) they serve and operate in an open and transparent matter.

Strategic Dimension – the board ensures that the organization has a strategic vision and strategies to achieve that vision. A key role for the board is envisioning the future, the threats and opportunities that the organization may encounter and work with the senior management to develop and implement plans that mitigate the threats and capitalize on the opportunities.

Description of Research Settings and Data Sources

Documents

The Ontario College System consists of 22 Anglophone colleges and 2 Francophone colleges. The 24 colleges range in size from 1,200 to 18,000 full time students. Seven serve major urban centres with populations over 500,000 and the balance serve small to medium sized urban centres as well as rural and northern geographic areas. All colleges have satellite campuses usually located in smaller centres with populations ranging from 6,000-50,000. College budgets range from \$35 million to over \$300 million.

The boards of these colleges range in size from 14 -18 members. On each board there are 4 internal board members representing students, faculty, support staff and administrative staff and each is elected by their respective constituency group. The President of the college is a board member. The balance of board members (9-13) are external and come from various sectors of the community such as industry, small business, labour and education. The Chair and Vice-Chair positions must be held by external members. Each college has an Office of the Board of Governors and an Office of the President. In each college these two Offices are physically located together or adjacent to each other. Larger colleges usually have two administrative personnel to staff

the Offices, one per Office while the medium and smaller sized colleges generally have one administrative staff who serves both Offices.

In the document collection phase I requested each Office of the Board and President of each Anglophone college to send me either their board self evaluation policies and instruments or to confirm that that the board did not self evaluate. Since any documents that the Francophone colleges may have were in French I decided, in lieu of requesting documents, to have a brief interview with each of the two Francophone presidents who kindly consented to conduct the interview in English. Other than conducting business affairs in French the Offices of the Board and President function in a similar fashion to those of the Anglophone colleges. The findings of the interviews with the Francophone college Presidents were used only to answer the “practices” element of the main research question and subsidiary question 1(b) which addressed how many colleges formally evaluate.

Survey

The survey on “The Perceptions and Practices of Ontario College Boards Regarding Board Self-Evaluation” was distributed to the members of 20 Ontario Anglophone college boards. As noted in Chapters I and III one college declined to participate in the survey and the Board that employs me was excluded.

The size of the survey population was 327 and 108 responded with 105 completing the whole survey. Three respondents were removed from the report on the survey results as they did not complete any of the questions related to board member perceptions and practices. The percentage of external board members completing the survey represented 69.8% of the total respondents and the internal board members

completing the survey represented 30.2%. The average service on a college board was 3.15 years with a range of 1 to 6 years. The most surveys received from any one college board were 8 and the least from any one board were 2.

Interviews

Given the size of the Ontario college system and the unique characteristics of each college, the descriptions that follow are purposefully very general in order to protect the identity of each of the college boards and their members that participated in the interview phase.

Twelve interviews were conducted with board members from a representative sample of Ontario college boards that involved two college boards that formally self evaluate board performance and two that do not conduct self evaluations. From the analysis of the board self evaluation policies and instruments that were collected in the document collection phase of this study and the survey data I was able to classify each college board based on its self evaluation practices and then select the subject boards. In addition to a board's self evaluation practice the size of the college and its geographic location were also used as a criteria in order to better represent the diverse characteristics of Ontario colleges.

The two "self evaluating" college boards were selected from the colleges based on three criteria. First, in the document collection phase the board indicated it did practice self evaluation. Second, based on my analysis of their policies and instruments and using the definitions of board self evaluation created for this study I classified the board as one that formally self evaluated. Third, the responses to the survey from that college's board members confirmed that the board was practicing formal board self evaluation. The first

subject board's college is located in a medium sized urban centre in southern Ontario and has a student population over 6,000. I assigned this board "SE1" as its identifier code. The second subject board's college has a student population over 2,500 and is located in a medium size urban centre in northern Ontario that serves a large geographic area. This board was coded "SE2".

The two "non-evaluating" college boards were selected from the colleges that participated in the survey phase and had indicated in the document collection phase that they didn't practice formal self evaluation. Analysis of survey data confirmed the subject college boards did not practice self evaluation. The first subject board's college is located in a large urban centre in Ontario and has a full time student population over 10,000 students. I assigned this board "NE1" as its identifier code. The second subject board's college, located in a small urban centre in southern Ontario that services a large rural area, has a full time student population between 3,000 and 6,000 and was coded "NE2".

The Chair of each selected board was asked to participate in an interview and each consented. Two additional participants were selected from each college board. I selected these participants from those that volunteered based on the general characteristics of board members which are gender, length of service and internal and external members. Of the twelve participants seven were male, five external representatives and two internal. There were 4 female external representatives and one female internal representative. The range of service was 18 months to 5 years. Table 1 provides a general description of each of the interview participants.

Table 1: Identifier Code and Description of Interview Participants

Participant	Board Evaluation Type	Board Member Type & Gender	Experience
SE1Ex1	Self Evaluates	External Male	5 years, Board Chair, serves on several board committees, service on private sector and public sector boards. Executive in private sector.
SE1Ex2	Self Evaluates	External, Male	18 months, Vice Chair, serves on several board committees, has served on and chaired several boards in both public and private sector. Completed courses on governance at Rotman School of Management, executive in the private sector.
SE1In1	Self Evaluates	Internal, Female	3 years, serves on one board committee, has experience on 3 not-for-profit boards.
SE2Ex1	Self Evaluates	External, Male	5 years, Board Chair, has served on several private and public sector boards, is a member of 3 college board committees. Works as a CEO in a private sector company.
SE2Ex2	Self Evaluates	External, Male	2 years, has served on one other not-for-profit board, serves on 2 college board committees. Holds a middle management position in the private sector.
SE2In1	Self Evaluates	Internal, Male	4 years, has served on 3 external not-for-profit boards including executive experience on those boards, serves on 3 college board committees, serves on union executive within the college.
NE1Ex1	Does not evaluate	External, Male	4 years, Board Chair, has served on 3 public sector boards, serves on 3 college board committees. Professional in the medical sector, completed MBA including governance course from the Rotman School of Management.
NE1Ex2	Does not evaluate	External, Male	2 years, has served on private sector and not-for-profit boards, chairs 1 college board committee and serves on 2 others. Professional, legal sector.
NE1Ex3	Does not evaluate	External, Female	4 years, has served on 2 not-for-profit boards, chair of 1 college board committee and serves on 1 other. Retired senior bureaucrat.
NE2Ex1	Does not evaluate	External, Female	5 years, Board Chair, has served on several public and not-for-profit boards, serves on 3 college board committees. Vice chair of another board that does self evaluate and required members to complete governance courses at Rotman. Retired senior administrator, public sector.
NE2Ex2	Does not evaluate	External, Male	5 years, past Chair, has served on several not-for-profit boards, serves on 3 board committees. Past President of a Labour Council, retired.
NE2In1	Does not evaluate	Internal, Female	2 years, no experience serving on other boards, serves on 1 college board committee.

Research Questions and Findings

In this section the results from the three research methods, document collection, survey, and interviews, will be reported. The reporting of the results is organized in the order of this study's research questions.

Main Question: What are the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college boards regarding the board self evaluation?

To address the main research question one has to collectively consider the findings related to each of the subsidiary questions. In this chapter I will provide a brief response to the main research question with the understanding that:

- i) a detailed response is provided to each of the subsidiary questions and taken as a whole these responses provide the findings related to the main research question.
- ii) in Chapter V a detailed response to the main research question is provided by synthesizing these findings using headings that reflect the subsidiary questions.

Document Collection

The documents that pertained to board self evaluation policy and self evaluation instruments collected from the Ontario college boards allowed me to report findings on the “practices” element of the main research question but not the “perceptions” element. Based on my analysis of the documents seventeen Ontario college boards currently practice some type of self evaluation. The detailed findings regarding Ontario college board self evaluation practices are presented with subsidiary question one.

Survey

The survey provided data that allowed me to address both the practices element and the perceptions elements of the main research question. Colleges were randomly assigned a letter of the alphabet between A and X and also coded SE if the board self evaluated and NE if the board did not. Board members that participated in the survey phase of the study and entered remarks in the comment sections of the survey were also coded. Each was assigned the alpha code of their respective college then coded “Ex” if the participant was an external board member or “In” if the participant was an internal board member and finally each was assigned a number that distinguished each participant that served on the same college board. The number of comments received was 29 and far exceeded my expectations. This was a pleasant discovery as most of these comments provided a deeper insight into the views of board members regarding board self evaluation practices than I originally thought would be gained from the survey results.

With respect to board self evaluation practices the findings from the survey of twenty colleges demonstrated a similar picture to that of the document analysis findings with the exception of the incidences of self evaluation of individual board members. Details are presented in the discussion of question one.

In the survey college board members were asked to state their level of agreement with the statement “Boards should formally evaluate their performance at least annually”. There were 105 responses to this statement with 98% in agreement and of those 65.7% were in strong agreement. One respondent disagreed with the statement and one respondent was uncertain. The survey also provided a large amount of data on the

perceptions of board members regarding various aspects of board self evaluation and this data will be presented with the relevant subsidiary questions.

Interviews

When asked about their thoughts on board self evaluation all twelve interviewees stated they were in favour of board self evaluation. The three quotes below appear to fit the Educational, Interpersonal, Political and Strategic Dimensions of the Chait et al. Board Competency Framework. These three interview participants reference the strategic role of the board, the need for the board to be knowledgeable and to monitor how it is functioning as well as the relationships among the members, the management staff, and board constituents.

Absolute necessity, (pause) the board is generally the top of the organization and must be strategic. The danger is that if a board is not well functioning and that may be caused by the board's lack of knowledge or management or certain members of the board hijacking the board so you may run into a risky situation. You need board evaluation to prevent that. SE1 Ex1

I think it's essential. I think it's very important to make sure we doing what's we supposed to be doing. Some people are skeptical about how the board works. (pause) We need to be sure we're not a rubber stamp. In a formal way once a year and after every meeting we evaluate and (umm) its way for me to be sure we're doing the most effective job we

can. So then I can communicate with my peers about (umm,) about how effective the board is and how strong the commitment is. SE1 In1

It's an important component of what a board does, the opportunity to evaluate. We need to know we're making good decisions, following our plans and the community needs to know, ah, that we're paying attention to how we work and looking to get better (pause) that's critical.

SE2 Ex1

As there was a great similarity in the answers to this question from the other nine interviewees the following quotes are representative of all of their responses. Applying the Chait framework I coded the first two quotes in the Educational and Interpersonal Dimensions and the third quote was also coded in the Strategic Dimension.

I think it's a very good idea, it's a chance to improve, to discuss how we think we're doing, to really talk to each other, although in my experience on many boards it doesn't happen often. NE 2 Ex 1

It's a good thing even though we're not doing it. It's a way to get people talking about their views of the way the board is working. (pause) It's a chance to get to know each other better. So we're considering it and have asked our governance committee to bring us some ideas on how we can do it (pause) so maybe next year we'll start. NE1 Ex 2

I think it's a good thing, um, because it's valuable, it helps prevent problems. It helps us focus on the ends and look to the future. SE2 In 1

Worthy of note was that the Chairs of both non-self-evaluating boards indicated they were considering introducing board self evaluation in the coming year. In both cases the Chairs indicated that they brought the idea to their boards. This may indicate a possible chair's role with respect to board self evaluation and the possible influence of formal courses on governance. This will be discussed further in Chapter V.

We do it on another board where I'm vice chair and I have talked with our board about it. There is only one against the idea so I hope we can get something in place next year. NE 2 Ex 1

The Chair of College NE1 has referred the matter to the Board's Governance Committee and asked for a report back to the Board by spring 2009.

I think it must be done-how else will you know if you're doing a good job? I have asked my board to consider it and with their approval I have asked our Governance Committee to research the best ways and bring us recommendations by next April. NE1 Ex1

It would appear that both these boards have a real interest as both had among the highest participation in the survey with 8 respondents each. After the interviews were concluded I was also contacted via email by the Chair of the Governance Committee of College NE1 and asked if I could send them references for board self evaluation. I complied with her request.

Subsidiary Questions:

- 1. What are the policies, procedures and instruments used by Ontario boards to formally self evaluate their performance?**

Board Documents

A request (Appendix A) for copies of any board self evaluation policies and/or instruments was sent via email to the Offices of the Board of Governors and President of each of the Anglophone colleges in Ontario. I asked each Office to please advise me if they didn't have self evaluation policies and/or instruments. I received responses from all colleges. I also included my college in the document collection phase of this study so that I could determine the percentage of Ontario colleges that self evaluate based on existing board documents.

The Francophone colleges were not part of the document collection or survey phases, however the presidents of the two Francophone colleges were interviewed by me at separate times to determine whether or not their boards practiced self evaluation and if so what policies and/or instruments they had in place.

A review of the board documents and the data from the interviews with the two francophone presidents revealed that while all eleven college boards who formally self evaluate have instruments in place that they use on annual basis there are only three boards with stand alone policies on board self evaluation. Eight boards have a statement on self evaluation that is a part of a "governance style" or "governance model" policy that addresses how the board will govern. Figure 1 provides an actual stand alone policy and figure 2 illustrates an actual statement on board self evaluation found in a college board policy on governance.

Six college boards had no policy statements but did have evaluation instruments that they used on an annual basis. Based on the definitions I created for this study these boards were considered to be conducting informal self evaluations.

In cases where boards have evaluation instruments these instruments typically consist of a set of statements that used a Likert-type response system that either used a numerical scale of 1-5 indicating level of agreement or a strongly agree to strongly disagree scale. All evaluation instruments were divided into categories that each board had determined it wanted to self evaluate. Examples of categories included Strategic Planning, Institutional Mission, Financial Management, Advocacy, Meeting Management, Board-CEO Relationship and Board Committee Effectiveness. Figure 3 provides a page from an actual board evaluation instrument that is representative of what most Ontario college boards use.

Figure 1: Example of Board Policy on Self Evaluation from College V

Board Self-Assessment

B – Governance Process

Background

The Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology Policy Framework (Governance and Accountability Framework) require that the Board establishes a formal and ongoing process of evaluation of its effectiveness. The performance measures for the assessment would match the fundamental elements needed to put governance principles into action. The Board of Governors is a dynamic body of individuals in that the terms are no longer than six years (except for the President). This means that the Board's knowledge of its Governance and Accountability responsibilities will also be dynamic. The Board must ensure that individual Governors are aware or that there are actions in place so that they may become aware of their responsibilities and, in turn, improve the decision making process.

Policy

The Board of Governors of "College V" will conduct an annual self evaluation of the Board's performance. The evaluation will include an assessment of:

Effectiveness of the Board
Conduct of the Board
Relationship with the President
Individual Performance
Feedback to the Chair

The evaluation will be used to establish a development plan that will enhance the Boards abilities to fulfill its responsibilities.

Figure 2: Example of Board Self Evaluation Statement in Governance Policy from College I

POLICY TYPE: Governance Process TITLE: Governing Style

NUMBER: GP-3 APPROVED: November 22, 2001
Date Last Reviewed: November 2007

The Board will govern with a style which emphasizes:

- Outward vision and openness;
- Encouragement of diversity in viewpoints;
- Strategic leadership;
- Clear distinction of Board and President roles;
- Collective rather than individual decision;
- Future rather than past or present;
- Measurable added value.

The Board will:

1. Operate in all ways mindful of its civic trusteeship obligation to the public. It will allow no officer, individual or committee of the Board to hinder or be an excuse for not fulfilling this or any other commitment.
2. Cultivate a sense of group responsibility. The Board will be responsible for excellence in governing. The Board will be an initiator of policy, not merely a reactor to staff initiatives. The Board will use the expertise of individual members to enhance the ability of the Board, rather than substitute individual judgments for Board values.
3. Direct, control and inspire the organization through the careful establishment of the broadest written policies reflecting the Board's values and perspectives. The board's major focus will be on the intended long term impacts outside the operating organization (ends), not on the administrative or programmatic means of attaining those effects.
4. Enforce upon itself whatever discipline is needed to govern with excellence. Discipline will apply to matters such as attendance, policy-making principles, respect of roles, speaking with one voice to staff through written policies, and ensuring the continuity of governance capability. **Continual Board development will include** orientation of new members in the Board governance process and **periodic Board discussion of process improvement.**
5. Welcome staff initiative and cultivate a sense of teamwork.
6. **Monitor and discuss the Board's process and performance at each meeting. Self-monitoring will include comparison of Board activity and discipline to policies in the Governance Process and Board-Staff Relationship categories.**
7. Conduct itself in a manner which complies with all relevant laws and regulations and fulfills all legal and fiduciary responsibilities.

Figure 3: Excerpt from Board Evaluation Form – College U

	Roles & Responsibilities/Governance	Agree ↔ Disagree
1	The duties and responsibilities of Board members are clearly stated in policy, Board organization is documented with a clear description of the Board and Board Committee responsibilities	4 3 2 1
2	The Board acts as governing trustees of the organization on behalf of the community at large and contributors while overseeing the organization's mission and goals, and acts as if it is accountable to contributors and beneficiaries	4 3 2 1
3	The Board has an appropriate committee structure to exercise its responsibilities in an effective manner. The Board rotates committee members and chairs at appropriate intervals.	4 3 2 1
	Strategic Planning/Annual Goal setting	
4	The Board has clear goals and actions resulting from relevant and realistic strategic planning. The Board reviews the strategic plan prior to approving annual corporation goals.	4 3 2 1
5	The Board establishes clearly defined annual goals for the corporation and checks periodically on the status of the corporation goals	4 3 2 1
6	The corporation met the goals for the past year	4 3 2 1
7	The Board periodically reviews the College's mission statement and implementation strategy	4 3 2 1
	Policy	
8	The Board attends to policy-related decisions which effectively guide operational activities of staff	4 3 2 1
9	The Board reviews the existing body of policy on a planned basis	4 3 2 1
10	The Board employs clear policies on program development and review and maintains appropriate policies on program quality and academic qualifications	4 3 2 1
	Monitoring	
11	The Board has the tools to ensure it is fulfilling its monitoring responsibilities	4 3 2 1
12	The Board regularly monitors and evaluates progress toward strategic goals	4 3 2 1
13	The Board monitors that policy is being implemented in a way that is acceptable to the Board	4 3 2 1
14	The Board reviews the College's significant legal exposures and assesses the organization's compliance process and record.	4 3 2 1
15	The Board receives regular reports on finances/budgets, products/program quality and performance and other important matters.	4 3 2 1

Three colleges had evaluation forms for the purpose of evaluating the effectiveness of individual meetings. I could not determine from the form if the board evaluated every meeting or evaluated meetings periodically. However in the interviews board members from two of the colleges that had forms for meeting evaluation did confirm that their board evaluated each meeting. Figure 4 provides an actual board form for evaluation of meetings.

Figure 4: Board Meeting Evaluation Form - College F

Board of Governors Meeting Evaluation

Regular evaluations of our meeting will assist in making future meetings more effective and productive. Your participation is appreciated

Meeting date: _____

Please check one of the following:

Satisfactory	Needs Improvement (elaborate below)	N/A	
			Our meeting was businesslike, results-oriented and we functioned as a team
			Our discussion was focused, cordial and well balanced, rather than dominated by personal views
			We dealt successfully with contentious or difficult items and attempted to develop solutions acceptable to all Governors
			Reports were clear , well prepared and provided adequate information for decision making
			We discussed policy issues and concentrated on strategic directions and solutions rather than on day-to-day management issues
			Appropriate time was allocated to agenda items pertinent to issues facing the College
			I was prepared and participated actively in Board activity
			I had relevant information to be able to participate
In future, I would like more information on.....			
My best suggestion for improving our next meeting is:			
General Comments:			

Six colleges had forms to evaluate individual members. In all cases a board member completes the form based on his/her own behaviour. In five cases the board member was not required to identify themselves and in one case the board member was asked to place their name on the form. In all cases it appeared that the information was gathered to identify areas of improvement for the board and to plan professional development to address areas that need improvement. There was no evidence that suggested the information was used in any other way such as individual discussions with the Chair. Figure 5 provides an individual self evaluation form used by one of the college boards.

Figure 5: Board Member Self Evaluation Form- College U

Name: _____

		Agree ↔ Disagree
1	As a Board member, I clearly understand my role and responsibilities.	4 3 2 1
2	I understand the organization's mission and its products/programs.	4 3 2 1
3	I participate fully in Board discussions.	4 3 2 1
4	I read material and am sufficiently prepared for Board meetings.	4 3 2 1
5	I understand the materials provided and the issues being discussed.	4 3 2 1
6	I am involved and interested in the Board's work.	4 3 2 1
7	I effectively represent the College in the community.	4 3 2 1
8	As a Board member, I feel well informed about important system and college issues.	4 3 2 1
9	I have read and understand the Board Policy manual	4 3 2 1
10	I am satisfied with my participation in Board and committee deliberations.	4 3 2 1
11	I am satisfied with my overall performance as a Board member.	4 3 2 1
12	I feel I have adequate opportunity to participate in discussions during Board meetings.	4 3 2 1
13	I feel I have input in the development of the College's strategic plan and annual goals.	4 3 2 1
14	The information I receive is sufficient to enable me to participate in an informed manner at meetings.	4 3 2 1
15	I am satisfied with the Board assessment process	4 3 2 1
16	What additional information/support do I need to be a more effective Board member?	
17	What strengths do I bring to the Board?	
18	How do I contribute to Board deliberations and discussions?	
19	Representation of the College in the community/advocacy: activities I have participated in:	
20	Goals for improvement:	

Interviews

Of the twelve interview participants six were from college boards that formally self evaluated. The six participants all described the procedures and/or forms their board used but none referenced a specific policy. In all cases their description of the evaluation procedures and/or instruments used matched the information found in the documents that their college board had provided in the document collection phase of this study. Using the Chait et al. Framework three comments were coded in the both the Strategic and Educational Dimensions, two comments were coded in the Educational Dimension and one comment was coded in the Strategic Dimension.

The three quotes that follow are representative of the information provided by the six interview participants who responded to the question about board self evaluation policies, procedures and instruments. The first comment illustrates characteristics of the Strategic and Educational Dimensions, the second Strategic and the third Educational.

Well, we evaluate every meeting. At the end of the meeting we do a critique by filling out a meeting evaluation form. We look for two things - short term, quick fixes and long term strategic things - I mean things we want to consider as priorities or things for board training so we improve. We also evaluate ourselves once a year and take this information along with the meeting feedback to our annual board retreat. We discuss it there and look for ways to improve. SE1 Ex1

We have a meeting evaluation form we use every meeting. In May of each year we do an annual evaluation and take those results to our retreat. We look at things such as strategic planning, policy development, advocacy

and our relationship with the president. It helps develop our work plan for the coming year. SE1 In1

At the end of each board meeting we evaluate how well we did. As Chair I lead the discussion and (umm) make sure anything that needs attention gets it. We also collect that information and review it along with our annual evaluation which we do in June. I think we're very good at following our procedures but (pause) we don't have a really strong way of looking at individual performance. (pause) We're currently reviewing our policies about that. SE2 Ex1

1. b) How many Ontario boards formally evaluate their own performance?

Documents and Surveys

The information from the Francophone college presidents was used solely for the calculation of the percentage of Ontario college boards that self evaluate. The data from these interviews along with the document collection data analysis allowed me to calculate, for the whole Ontario college system as of October 2008, the number of Ontario college boards that practice self evaluation.

Using the board self evaluation definitions that I created for this study I reviewed the board documents that were sent to me, responses from board offices and the data obtained from the interviews with Francophone college presidents and found the following results. The number of college boards who conduct formal board self evaluation was 11 (45.8%) and the number who conducted informal self evaluation was 6 (25.0 %). Combining the formal and informal board self evaluation findings show that 17 college boards or approximately 71% conduct some form of annual self evaluation.

Of the 17 college boards that did self evaluate 6 provided data that indicated the board conducted self evaluation of individual members. The number of college boards that reported that they did not self evaluate was 7 or approximately 29%.

The survey results indicated that 53.4% of respondents reported their board conducted formal board self evaluation, 20.4% conduct informal board self evaluation while 26.2% reported that their board had no evaluation process in place. Recognizing that 20 boards participated in the survey as compared to 24 boards in the document collection phase the survey findings with respect to board self evaluation practices appear similar to the findings from the document analysis with the exception of individual board member evaluation. The difference in the results between the two data collection methods may be due to some respondents applying the definition of formal evaluation and individual evaluation to their board's practices differently than I did. Table 2 provides a comparison of the results from the two data sources.

Table 2 Comparison of Self Evaluation Incidence by Data Source

Self Evaluation	Document Collection/Francophone Interviews (24)	Survey (20)
Formal	45.8%	53.4 %
Informal	25.0%	20.4 %
Formal & Informal	70.8%	73.8%
None	29.2%	26.2%
Individual	20.8%	34.6%

1. c) How does this study's survey results compare to the 2005 Deloitte Study?

I also compared the document analysis results with the survey results from my study and the 2005 Deloitte Study with respect to the number of college boards that reported they self evaluated (Table 3). In reading Table 3 it should be noted that there

were 105 survey respondents but only 103 answered the question about their board's self evaluation type.

The survey component of the Deloitte Study was actually conducted November 2004, approximately 4 years earlier than my survey. The Deloitte Study did not define board self evaluation but simply asked board members to respond to the following statement: "The Board has developed and implemented an annual, formalized process to assess Board performance." The number of respondents to this statement was 236 and included college senior staff who served as resources to the boards. Deloitte notes that approximately 74% of respondents were board members and 26% senior college staff. Since there are different variables for the two studies direct comparisons should not be made but rather the results may be viewed as a general reflection of recent Ontario college board self evaluation practices. That said, there appears to be some similarities in the findings especially when comparing the results with respect to boards that do not self evaluate.

Table 3 Comparison of 2008 Hanlon Study to 2005 Deloitte Study

Data Source	N	Formal Evaluation	Informal Evaluation	Evaluation Total	Uncertain	No Evaluation
Board Documents	24	45.8%	25%	70.8%	n/a	29.2%
Hanlon Survey	103	53.4%	20.4%	73.8%	n/a	26.2%
Deloitte Survey	236	n/a	n/a	60%	17%	23%

1. d) How would board members rate the effectiveness of their current board evaluation practices?

Survey

The survey results indicated that 60.9% of respondents believed their board's current evaluation process needs improvement while 9.5% were uncertain. When asked if their board's current evaluation process helps their board to perform effectively 55.2 % responded that it did while 8.6% believed it didn't. About two of ten respondents (22.9%) indicated this question did not apply and 13.3 % were uncertain. When this question was isolated to respondents who stated their board formally evaluated 85.2% felt their current evaluation process helped their board perform effectively. In stark contrast when the same question was isolated to respondents from boards that informally self evaluated only 38.1% felt their board's evaluation practice helped the board perform effectively. This contrast continued when survey participants were asked about the relationship of board evaluation to board plans for professional development. The findings indicate that 68.5% of survey participants from formal self evaluating boards reported that their board's evaluation process was used to plan board professional development versus only 15% of participants from informal self evaluating boards.

Interviews

The six interview participants from the two boards that did self evaluate all felt their Board's self evaluation practices were effective. Participants from Board SE1 did not indicate any need to change or improve their methods while all three participants from Board SE2 did indicate that they could always improve. The comment below is representative of that view.

I think it's effective. We can always improve and we're looking at ways to do that, like starting board member evaluations. SE2 Ex1

2. What are the beliefs of college board members regarding evaluating:

a) the performance of the board as a whole?

Survey

The findings from the survey showed that 98.1% support formal board self evaluation with 65.7% indicating strong agreement and 32.4% agreement (Table 4). When asked if they would join a college board that evaluated its collective performance 97.1% indicated they would join a college board that evaluated its collective performance with 1.9% responding they were uncertain and 1% responding in the non applicable category. No respondents indicated that they would not join a board that evaluated collective performance.

One comment was made that appears to support board self evaluation for the purposes of continuous improvement and accountability and was coded in the Educational and Political Dimensions of the Chait et al. Board Competency Framework.

Board self and collective evaluation should be owned by the Board and conducted to increase our effectiveness and fulfilling our fiduciary responsibility. College T SE Ex1

Interviews

As illustrated in the interview findings presented in response to the main research question there was unanimous support among all the interviewees for collective board

self evaluation. However there were differences of opinion regarding evaluation of individual members and these will be presented in the next section.

2 b) the performance of individual board members?

Survey

When asked about evaluating the board's collective performance and individual member performance 66.7 % supported evaluating both, 27.6 % were not supportive and 5.7% were uncertain (Table 4). The survey data also indicated that 85.7 % of respondents would join a college board that evaluated the individual board member performance, 6.7 % would not join and 7.6 % were uncertain.

Table 4 Board Member Perspectives on Collective and Individual Evaluation

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Uncertain
Boards should formally evaluate their performance at least annually.	65.7%	32.4%	1.0%	0.0%	1.0%
Board evaluation should include both collective and individual performance.	22.9%	43.8%	21.9%	5.7%	5.7%
I would not join the college board if they evaluated individual member performance .	1.9%	4.8%	41.9%	43.8%	7.6%

Seven comments were made relating to evaluating individual board members. Six of the comments appear to fit with the Interpersonal Dimension of Chait et al. Board Competency Framework. For these participants it appears the primary concern with evaluation of individual members is the effect on group dynamics and the interpersonal relations among board members. The first three comments below also align with Chait et al. Educational Dimension Competency. These participants appear to suggest that there is a need for a board to have or to develop performance standards and to have a self evaluation process that is based on those standards. Three of the respondents also reference the fact that college boards consist of volunteers and one respondent voices a concern that individual evaluation may negatively affect board recruitment.

I am of two minds on this issue: strongly supportive of the concept of evaluation of collective performance based on the reasons cited above; but not entirely "sold" on the concept of evaluation of individual performance (sic) on non-profit, volunteer boards. At the very least, if a peer assessment/evaluation process is used by a volunteer board, it should be done in conjunction with a self-assessment/evaluation process. Assessment (i.e. measuring) and evaluation (i.e. making judgments based on assessment) require skill and sensitivity - especially when used for the purposes of peer evaluation. If done well, they can be powerful tools for supporting improved individual - and collective - performance; but, if done badly, they can cause bad feelings and resentment.

College S NE Ex4

I like the idea of individual member evaluation however it must be non-

threatening and perhaps a self-evaluation against established standards.

College A SE In1

The self evaluation of individual performance is more problematic because of the volunteer nature of the college boards. I would agree that self evaluation of individual performance is essential however the volunteer membership with no clear expectation of performance makes this level of self evaluation difficult. There are no clear levels of performance given to board members. Many members would (sic) be making their self evaluation based on their own expectations.

College W NE In1

Evaluating individual members is more difficult and can often hurt relationships. College U SE Ex1

I found it a very useful process, but there are some human relations pitfalls in the individual evaluation process. College B SE Ex1

We are volunteers. It is hard enough (sic) to recruit new governors without adding barriers like individual evaluation. College V SE Ex2

The seventh comment seems to fit with the Contextual and Educational Dimensions of the Chait et al. Board Competency Framework. This participant infers there may be differences in values and roles between internal and external board members which could

contribute to the complexity of board self evaluation and offers a suggestion on how to address the issue.

External members have a tendency (sic) to step up to the plate in those areas where internal members often are cheer leaders for the institution(sic) and find themselves in an awkward position to take certain stands on decisions. So it is far more difficult to evaluate each member yearly. The time for individual evaluation should be at closing end of their first term (3 Years) to see and in conjunction (sic) with the Chair, President will an offer of a second term of 3 years be made (sic). This is the time of proper individual evaluation. What does the person bring to the table, what does the person contribute, can we afford another three years with this member who has been non supportive, non involved or does not have the best interests of the institution at the forefront of their involvement.(sic) College U SE Ex 2

Interviews

There were varying views expressed regarding individual member evaluation ranging from strong support to strong opposition. The interview findings appear to draw a similar pattern of support for individual board evaluation as found in the survey responses. Eight participants indicated some level of support while four were against individual evaluations. Similar to the survey comments the data from the interviews provide a deeper understanding of why a board may or may not support individual evaluations.

One participant, a board chair, was strongly in favour of individual board member self evaluation and his comment was coded in the Analytical Dimension of the Chait et al. Board Competency Model as his comments seem to focus on the need for board members to analyze problems and develop solutions.

I think that's critical. In my opinion that's a very, very important part. (umm) Over the years we've experienced challenges with meeting quorum and having full participation so I think individual evaluation of performance is a necessity and (umm) and (pause) and particularly when you count on those individuals to bring a wide range of experiences to the table particularly from the outside, you know, the external governors, so you need them to participate, to (umm) look at things from different angles so, (umm) so we're better able to solve problems. SE2 Ex1

Seven were supportive of individual evaluations but stated cautions and/or offered suggestions if a board was to implement evaluation of individual members. Their concerns were the possible effect on group dynamics, the need to ensure a good process was in place and the recognition that board members are volunteers. Applying the Chait et al. Board Competency Model the comments were all coded in the Interpersonal Dimension. The following quotes are representative of the views of the seven.

I'm a little ambivalent. Theoretically it's a good idea but you need a good deal of trust. We're all volunteers. It might affect group dynamics. If

you're going to do it you need to spend time at the front end to make sure everyone understands (pause) and be sure everything is confidential.

NE2 Ex1

I'm in favour of it. As a CEO I'm evaluated so only reasonable board members are. But you need to be careful, there's a couple of issues, governors are volunteers, what is done with the information and people feeling nervous about what is said about them. You need to have each board member set goals for themselves and then assess each year (pause) that's stays between them and the chair. SE1 Ex2

We need to move to that level. There is a general reluctance to undergo individual evaluation but that reluctance I think can be overcome with reasonable evaluation tools like using a 360 approach and keeping the discussion between the chair and each member. NE1 Ex1

Four participants were not supportive of individual evaluation. Their reasons for not supporting evaluations of individual board members were similar to the cautions expressed by those who supported individual evaluations. Concern was expressed about the effect on group dynamics and all the comments were coded in the Interpersonal Dimension. Similar to a comment made in the survey there also appeared to be a belief that because college board members are volunteers they should not be evaluated. .

I'm opposed to that. We're a collegial body (pause) we come with various backgrounds which is a strength but it also means we bring baggage we

don't want to talk about. I think you can evaluate at the general board level and that's it. NE2 Ex2

I'm not for it. We don't have enough information to form a judgment on other members. It's hard to evaluate someone after a year (pause) I mean you might only see that a person for a couple of hours a month so to me it's not worth it, the chance of upsetting people especially since we're here as volunteers. NE1 Ex3

Personally I don't think it should happen. It could lead to people being intimidated. I have no problem with evaluating the board, the functions and so on. Now you have to keep everyone happy because you want them to speak out and say what's bothering them so if they feel they're going to be criticized for having a contrary opinion they may not say what's on their mind. I just don't think sitting at a board table and discussing individual performance is a very productive or collegial situation.

SE2 In1

I'm against it. The potential for harm is greater than any good. People could become resentful and feel hurt. We're all volunteers, (umm) we're not paid like boards of education so I'm (umm) not sure people would join our board if we're going to evaluate them. NE2 In1

3. What are the beliefs of college board members regarding a common set of board evaluation processes and tools versus having the autonomy to develop and implement their own criteria?

Survey

There appeared to be a strong preference for having autonomy regarding control over how a board self evaluates as 76.2% of respondents indicated that boards should decide which evaluation processes and tools to use based on their board's circumstances rather than be mandated to use a process and set of tools common to all college boards. A small percentage of respondents (4.8%) were unsure while 19.1% preferred that evaluation processes and tools be common for all college boards.

Interviews

The preference for autonomy was more pronounced among the interview participants as 11 of 12 preferred allowing boards to choose their own evaluation processes. Three participants noted that each board had its own set of circumstances and strategic issues to manage and therefore there should be flexibility in board self evaluation processes.

I think each board should develop their own. We're all in different circumstances. We're in a very different situation than a big Toronto college. (pause) Our goals are different; our make-up is different so, so how we evaluate ourselves should be different. SE2 Ex2

Each college is different so let each board develop their own instruments that deal with their unique features. SE1 Ex2

You don't need to re-invent the wheel but, you know, each college is different, (pause) we have different goals, programs, students and so on so we should get to choose how we evaluate. NE2 Ex2

Seven participants agreed that boards should have the freedom to choose their own evaluation processes but suggested that a common framework or set of standards would help boards. These three quotes are representative of their views.

I would be ok with a common framework but let's recognize we're all different so you must allow boards to customize to meet their needs. I think the only thing that should be mandated is that there be a board evaluation process. NE1 Ex1

There shouldn't be a one size fits all.(umm) I've gone to a lot of college conferences and I know we have some things in common but there are lots of differences.(umm) Maybe you could have a range of systems to chose from (umm) but I think the board should decide how they're going to do it. SE2 Ex 1

I think it would be very helpful to have a common template with some flexibility for boards to choose because we work in different situations. NE2 Ex1

One respondent, while supporting board choice, raised a different concern from the others. She voiced a fear that if each board had to use the same evaluation system then perhaps a rating system would be developed and boards would be compared. It appears she feels such comparisons would not be fair because each board operates in different circumstances.

From my perspective my board has good instruments in house. I think each board should develop their own or decide what they want use. (pause) My fear with a common set of instruments is about a rating system being developed. We're all different so you shouldn't compare, but just look at what happened with KPI's, they weren't supposed to compare but everyone does (pause) even my own college. (laughs) SE1 In1

One respondent was in favour of having a common set of evaluation processes and tools and went to state that there should be mandatory reporting of the results to government. Of note is that while this participant did support publicly reporting board self evaluation processes he did not support publicly reporting board self evaluation results.

I think there should be a standard package with formal standards to follow.

I think boards should have to file their results with the Government of

Ontario every year. NE1 Ex2

**4. What are board members' beliefs regarding reporting publicly on their board's
a) evaluation processes and b) evaluation results?**

Survey

The survey results appear to demonstrate that there is support for publicly reporting evaluation processes as 70.5% of respondents (8.65% strongly agree and 61.9% agree) believed the board's evaluation process should be posted on the college website while 24.7% believed the evaluation process should not be posted and 4.8% were uncertain. A much different result emerged when board members were asked about posting evaluation results as 45.2 % of respondents believed the evaluation results should be posted on the college website while 46.2% were against and 8.7% were uncertain. When asked about joining a board that published its evaluation results 77.6% indicated they would join a board that published its evaluation results on collective performance, 10.7% indicated they would not while 11.7 % were uncertain. One written comment was made in response to this question. The respondent, who indicated strong disagreement with publishing evaluation results, explains that in his/her opinion boards can be accountable without publishing the results.

You can be accountable yet not post the results of the Board evaluation.

College I SE Ex1

Interviews

Among the interview participants there appeared to be stronger support for publishing the processes on the college website than among the survey participants. Eleven interview participants (91.6%) thought boards should publicly report their self

evaluation processes. However with respect to reporting the self evaluation results the interview participants appeared less supportive than the survey participants as 33.3% of the interview participants stated they supported publishing the results versus 45.6% of the survey participants. In comparing the perspectives of the two groups it is important to keep in mind the small interview population size and hence the statistical validity of the comparison is questionable. That said, in both groups the majority supported publicly reporting self evaluation processes but not the results.

While the survey provided very little insight into the thinking behind board member's positions on the publishing of board self evaluation processes and results, the interviews did. The two concerns most stated by the interview participants were a belief that the results would be used for comparison purposes among colleges and publishing results may negatively affect board recruitment. Similar to the theme that emerged in response to question three, participants felt comparisons would be unfair as each board operates within different environments.

It may lead to comparisons. Like I said before each board works in different circumstances so we shouldn't compare. The purpose should be to make the board more effective. The public doesn't need to know the results but only that there is a rigorous process. NE1 Ex2

With results my concern is about comparisons being made and, and we're all different. SE2 Ex1

I'm ok with the process but not the results. I think it could lead to misinterpretations and unfair comparisons because you know, every college is different. NE2 In1

Three participants, two from the same board, voiced a concern about the effect that publicly reporting the results may have on recruitment.

No, there's too much politics so you may end up driving good people away from joining the boards.

SE1 Ex1

I would not agree with reporting results because it could scare people who might serve on the board. SE1 Ex2

I'm not sure what that would accomplish, hmm, not sure if it would boost the public's opinion and worse it may cause good people not to join the board because they worry about being blamed if there were poor results.

(pause) So I'm against it. SE2 In1

Two participants were concerned that publishing the results may cause boards to develop self evaluation processes that ensured positive results so as to avoid criticism.

People may not understand or start to draw the wrong conclusions because they don't have all the information. So it could cause boards to not be as

critical as they should be because they know they have to share the results (pause) so better to just discuss it in camera. SE2 Ex2

I'd be reluctant to do that. I think there's a fear about negative results so some boards may create a self evaluation that always makes them look good. NE2 Ex2

Four participants were supportive of publicly reporting their board's self evaluation results because it demonstrates accountability. One participant, an internal board member, elaborated that it would help her with her particular constituency group.

Yes because it demonstrates a level of accountability. In my case I could use them to deal with skeptical faculty members. SE1 In1

5. Why do some college boards evaluate their own performance and some do not?

First the findings will be presented that relate to why college boards self evaluate. Then the findings that may provide some understanding of why boards don't self evaluate will be presented.

Survey

Survey participants were asked "why should boards self evaluate?" and given a list of possible reasons plus an option to add reasons that weren't included in the list provided with the question. Respondents were instructed to select as many reasons as they believed appropriate. There were 105 responses which are detailed in Table 5.

Based on the survey responses the most preferred reason for conducting board self evaluation was continuous improvement with 98.6% of respondents selecting it. Transparency and accountability (85.7%) and quality assurance (82.2%) were the next preferred reasons followed by strengthening the board/president relationship (57.1%) and role modeling to the college (55.9%). It would appear that some sort of government or regulatory requirement had little support as only 17% of respondents selected it as a reason to self evaluate.

Table 5: Why Should Boards Self Evaluate?

	n=105
Transparency & Accountability	85.7%
Role Model to College Regarding Evaluation Practices	55.9%
Government or Regulatory Requirements	17.0%
Quality Assurance	82.2%
Continuous Improvement	98.6%
Strengthen Board/President Relationship	57.1%
I don't believe Boards should self evaluate	1.0%

Table 6 provides a comparison of responses from members of boards that do self evaluate with members of boards that don't. With the exception of the response rates to transparency and accountability as well as role modeling there appears to be little difference between the respondents from boards that self evaluate and those that don't. The possible significance of those differences will be discussed in Chapter 5. It is also interesting to note that the one respondent who didn't support board self evaluation is a member of a board that self evaluates.

Table 6: Comparison of Self Evaluating and Non-Self Evaluating Board Survey Responses: Why should boards self evaluate?

	Self Evaluating n=78	Non-Self Evaluating n= 27
Transparency & Accountability	92.1%	66.7%
Role Model to College Regarding Evaluation Practices	60.1%	44.4%
Government or Regulatory Requirements	19.2%	11.1%
Quality Assurance	82.6%	81.5%
Continuous Improvement	98.2%	100%
Strengthen Board/President Relationship	60.1%	51.9%
I don't believe Boards should self evaluate	1.3%	0%

The respondents' statements from the survey's comments section provided a deeper insight into board members' views regarding why boards self evaluate. For the first five comments the coding based on the Chait et al. Board Competency Model is noted above each comment due to the variety of characteristics within the comments. Themes of improving collectively and individually along with recognizing responsibilities emerged. These respondents appeared to value how evaluation can result in better group dynamics and better board analytical skills which may help the board be more effective.

Contextual Dimension, Educational Dimension, Interpersonal Dimension

to learn more about the college system, and, in particular, about _____
College; to learn more about the responsibilities of governors; to learn
more about other governors; to learn more about the leadership abilities
and goals of _____ College's management team; note that knowledge
is effectiveness. College D NE Ex2

Educational Dimension, Analytical Dimension

Board self and collective evaluation should be owned by the Board and conducted to increase our effectiveness and fulfilling our fiduciary responsibility. I support completing the base information as part of our Board Meetings. Taking the feedback, collecting the results and forming a trend of ideas, issues presented by members. A discussion "In Camera" of the results and interpretation is valueable (sic). College T SE Ex1

Educational Dimension, Interpersonal Dimension

If the Board works collectively together all members will learn how to overcome challenges that their expertise areas are not in.

College U SE Ex2

Interpersonal Dimension

It provides a vehicle for Board members to express concerns over process that can be acted on quickly before they become a problem for a specific Board member or the entire Board. College A SE Ex1

Analytical Dimension

To ensure a responsive and reflective board College K SE Ex1

Respondents' comments also indicated that they thought evaluation would assist their board to be accountable. These next five comments were coded as fitting in the Political Dimension of the Chait et al. Model because they infer that boards must pay attention to their stakeholders.

You can be accountable. College I SE Ex 1

I strongly believe that it is important for Board evaluation to take place as we are accountable to the Public and therefore must be sensitive to our effectiveness. College V SE Ex1

We are a publicly-funded institution and the people we serve have a right to know whether we are performing our jobs, and whether we are serving college/community needs. College D NE Ex2

IT IS CRITICAL!!!! we are a publically (sic) funded organization.
College B SE Ex2

The Board is in place to hold the College accountable.
College S NE Ex1

Four comments appear to fit the Educational Dimension of the Board Competency Model in that issues of quality assurance and/or improving effectiveness are raised. A new theme related to Board/CEO relationship emerged from the first three comments. It is also observed that this theme was raised by internal board members at three different colleges.

quality assurance, overcome Board reliance on CEO College U SE In1

Often external board members do not recognize quality assurance measures related to college functions, for example, awareness of

responsibilities resident in approvals of short programs now done at Board level rather than Ministry level. Oddly, this is true even of professionals in fields where quality assurance is a critical factor (engineering, health). Small boards often function in relative isolation with a very dependent relationship with their College President. These are two powerful reasons for self-evaluation, which should awaken recognition of responsibilities and help Board members develop a more objective view of their governance function with the college and its administration.

College V SE In1

Board self evaluation is very important to being a highly effective Board. The process should be driven by the Board, itself, and not the CEO or senior staff. College I SE In1

If nothing else (sic) it makes you think about your status as a board member, your input, and do you need to improve and what areas.

College O SE Ex1

b) What factors contribute to a board deciding not to evaluate its own performance?

Comments from the survey and the interviews provide some insight regarding why some boards do not self evaluate.

Survey

Six comments were made in the survey that appear to address reasons why some boards do not self evaluate. There were three comments that I coded in the Interpersonal

Dimension of the Chait Model as the respondents were expressing concerns about interpersonal relationships and group dynamics. Similar concerns were also voiced by some of the interview participants which I will report in the interview data section.

It is easy to recognize which committee member said what, for instance, if one has been paying attention to behaviour and vocabulary in meetings

College D NE Ex3

...if done badly, they can cause bad feelings and resentment.

College S NE Ex4

Poor group dynamics will inhibit an honest discussion of results.

College T SE Ex1

There were two comments from board members from a non evaluating board that may indicate other reasons beyond concern for negatively affecting group dynamics and interpersonal relationships. The first comment refers to a short exercise that a committee of the respondent's board conducts once per year. I coded the comment as fitting with the Educational Dimension because it appears to make reference to looking at what the committee did with a view to improving in the coming year albeit arguably in a superficial manner. I also coded this comment as "underestimating the complexity and value" of self evaluation and I will discuss this theme in Chapter V along with how the influence of dissenting board members may be a possible reason some boards don't self evaluate.

In our FCSG Committee we use 15-20 minutes of our last meeting per year to identify the things we liked, didn't like and what we should do different for next year. That simple an approach is about how much time should be spent on self evaluation with the primary goal being input for the next year's chair to plan better. College S NE Ex2

Even though the next comment does not appear to support board self evaluation the part of the comment with respect to development and continuous improvement does appear to fit with the Interpersonal and Educational Dimensions of the Chait et al. Model. While arguing against board self evaluation the respondent appears to be open to consider it if it can be demonstrated that it would help board members individually and collectively improve. Again the theme of underestimating the value of evaluation appears to be an underlying reason for not supporting evaluation but a new related theme also is evident. This respondent links his/her perspective to the cost to the tax payer and appears to think the cost exceeds the value. This respondent also appears to suggest that government should not make board self evaluation mandatory.

Better to answer this question by answering what is the value add that doing it that taxpayers are willing to pay for???(sic) I might support it only for the purposes of maximizing individual and team development and continual improvement. There is far too much waste and inefficiency in the college system now so do not add anything on top as mandatory. College S NE Ex3

Interviews

Five factors that may indicate why some boards don't evaluate emerged from the analysis of the interview transcripts. First, it seems that the topic of self evaluation has never been raised. Similar to some of the survey comments it appears that non-evaluating boards lack knowledge about value of self evaluation and therefore underestimate its value.

I think it's just lack of knowledge and information (pause) not knowing what the benefits are. Our Chair has made it an item this year. He explained it and everyone thought it was a good idea so that's why we're looking at it. NE1 Ex3

I don't think we set out not to evaluate. It just never came up. Our Chair has put it on the agenda and we're considering it... NE2 Ex2

I think it's a lack of knowledge. (umm) I don't know why else. We've always done it at _____. It's difficult to improve if you don't. (umm)
People need to understand that. SE2 Ex1

Second, there appears to be a natural resistance to, or fear of, being evaluated which may explain why the topic isn't raised at some boards. Similar to comments made by some survey participants four interview participants voiced concerns about the effect on group dynamics and interpersonal relationships as well as concerns about embarrassment if one's performance is negatively evaluated.

I think there's a fear of evaluation, of criticism. There are factions within a board that set up various camps. Sometimes people can't separate issues from personalities so there's this fear disagreements would be highlighted.

SE1 Ex 1

Probably because people think never done it before so why now? Some people have a fear of evaluation, people don't like to deal with (umm) those kinds of things. It could make discussions awkward. SE2 In1

I think first board members need to believe in it then they have to get over any embarrassment if the results are not good. You have to get over that 'old boys club' culture where everyone looks after each other instead of dealing with problems head on. SE1 Ex 2

I'm not sure. I guess because they might worry about poor results or maybe (pause) they worry about hurt feelings, about not getting along.

SE2 Ex2

Third, there may be an over-reliance on the President and a belief that as long as the President is doing a good job, the board doesn't have to concern itself with its own performance.

The issue never came up, the question was never posed until now and that's because I put it on the agenda because of my experience with

_____ Board. Why didn't evaluation come up? I think we have a history and tradition of good presidents. We have a level of confidence in our President so the board didn't worry or think about evaluating how it's doing. NE2 Ex1

I don't know about other boards but we have a very good president so the board is comfortable. If the Chair hadn't raised it I'm not sure we would be talking about doing it. NE1 Ex 2

Fourth, as inferred in the comments above and stated in the comment immediately below it appears that the Chair as the leader of the board needs to see self evaluation as an item of importance. It also appears that Chairs or board members that have taken courses on governance may be predisposed to introducing or supporting board self evaluation.

For us it simply never came up, then as Chair I raised it. I'm convinced from my Rotman program that evaluation is important. I think someone, probably the Chair, decides it's important and then brings it to the board and convinces them it's important. NE1 Ex1

Fifth, there may be a concern about the additional cost and work involved in conducting self evaluation. This concern was also raised in the survey comments, however it was from a participant from the same board as this interview participant who seems to be recognizing his board colleague's thoughts on this question.

.... I think some are doubtful because it could mean more work and more cost (pause) so the Chair has some convincing to do. NE2 Ex2

6. What do college board members believe would be beneficial to assist them to:

a) implement board self-evaluation?

Survey

In the survey respondents were asked to select as many answers as they believed appropriate from a list of possible answers to a question regarding what would assist boards to implement self evaluation. Survey respondents indicated that board professional development on evaluation processes and instruments (86.5%) was the preferred method to assist boards to implement board self evaluation. Based on the survey results the Board Chair appeared to have a role regarding implementing board self evaluation as 51% of respondents listed “requested by the Board Chair” as a way to assist boards to begin self evaluation. Assistance by Colleges Ontario (47.1%) and professional development on effective group dynamics (42.3 %) were also preferred ways to help boards. Table 7 provides an overview of the survey responses regarding the list of possible ways to assist boards with the implementation of self evaluation. Respondents were also provided an opportunity to add their thoughts on other ways that were not included in the list that was provided. Several comments were made which are presented after Table 7.

Table 7: What board members believe would assist boards who don't currently self evaluate to implement board self evaluation.

	Response Percent
board professional development on evaluation processes and instruments	86.5%
hiring an external consultant	26.9%
assistance provided by College Compensation and Appointments Council	26.9%
assistance provided by Colleges Ontario	47.1%
requested by Board Chair	51.0%
requested by President	11.5%
professional development on effective group dynamics	42.3%

Twelve comments were made that addressed ways to help boards implement board self evaluation. While all of the comments reflected themes similar to the list of options that was provided with the question these comments do offer more insight. I examined each respondent's answers to determine if each respondent had also checked the pre-determined answer that was similar to the comment each made. In all cases each had so there was no effect on the quantitative data collected for this question.

Applying the Chait et al. Model to the responses, I coded 8 responses as fitting with the Educational Dimension as each had an element of professional development

and/or continuous improvement albeit with variances as to the type of professional development. Five respondents referenced using best practices. The first of these five respondents suggests conferences, consultants and reading material as ways to learn best practices, the second and third suggest conferences while the fourth suggests looking at best practices in industry and cautions against the use of tax payer money for board self evaluation.

Understanding of best practices of highly effective Boards which may be learned through attendance at quality governance conferences; reading material re: governance; and use of a consultant skilled in governance.

College I SE In1

I would suggest you have speakers present on best practices at Colleges Ontario Conference College T SE Ex2

Make it a workshop at annual conference. College U SE Ex3

Learn (sic) best practices from industry and stay as far away from any government based group as possible. DO NOT spend one cent of taxpayer money on this. College S NE Ex3

The fifth respondent that referenced best practices does not suggest professional development but appears to see self evaluation as a part of continuous improvement as there is a reference to benchmarking. This respondent states that “there are still a lot of

non-believers”. The suggestion is made that rather than mandate board self evaluation a better approach to board self evaluation is best practices/benchmarking as benchmarking with college boards that do self evaluate may morally persuade the “non-believers” to self evaluate.

Board self-evaluation should be a best practice encouraged (not mandated) by Colleges Ontario and by the Compensation Council. There are still a lot of non-believers, so benchmarking with Colleges that do it and are doing well provides a form of moral suasion.

College M SE Ex 1.

One respondent suggested providing training on evaluation at new board member orientation sessions.

Make training on evaluation part of governor orientation

College S NE Ex1

Two respondents appear to suggest that the Board Chair has a role to play to help the board understand the value of self evaluation and to ensure self evaluation practice is a part of the board’s work. In the first comment, immediately below, two new points are made regarding assisting boards to implement board self evaluation. First, there is a reference to getting implementation assistance from the College Compensation and Appointments Council. Second, there is a suggestion to consider making experience with and acceptance of board evaluation a criteria for new board members appointments.

My thoughts are the first step is acceptance or awareness. The Chair should be able to sell his/her Board on the importance based on good governance practices currently in place in any major corporation. Actual implementation assistance is available from the College Comp and Appt. Council. An even earlier step may involve the selection of Board members who have experience and acceptance with Board evaluation.

College U SE Ex 4

Important to build the self evaluation in to (sic) the work of a "policy governance" board as one of the policy governance monitoring reports. Beyond the annual activity there needs to be a mechanism to approach any "drifting" from governance expectations and good practice. Typically this rests with a (strong, competent) chair who works to achieve satisfactory Board "work" at each meeting and throughout the year.

College G SE Ex2

Two respondents commented that there needs to be "repercussions" or "consequences". In the first comment the respondent appears to be suggesting that unless there are consequences for non performance there is little value to conducting evaluations. In the second comment a list of possible mandatory requirements for board members is suggested along with the recommendation there be repercussions if those requirements are not met.

Typically, performance evaluations are meaningful only if they have direct consequences. College S NE Ex4

An evaluation process is ineffective if there are not mandatory requirements to be met, such as attendance at meetings, active participation on committees and at meetings, availability to take on extra tasks, participation in board activities, such as fundraisers, active participation as advocates of the college in the community. As well, there is a need for mandatory repercussions if those requirements are not met, such as non-attendance at three meetings in a year results in removal from the board. College W NE Ex1

Based on the use of upper case in the comment below one respondent from College B appeared to feel strongly that board self evaluation should be mandatory. While this respondent used the word “mandatory” as did the respondent from College W it appears to have a much different meaning. I examined both these respondent’s answers to the list of pre determined responses for the question “Why should boards self evaluate” and the College B respondent had checked the “government or regulatory requirements” option while the College W respondent had not. It would appear that the College B respondent is suggesting that an external body that has the authority such as government make college board self evaluation mandatory while the College W respondent appears to be suggesting that each board decide for itself what is mandatory in order to be a member of that board and then self evaluate against those requirements.

MAKE IT MANDATORY College B SE Ex2

Interviews

There was some variety in the suggestions among the 12 interview participants but all 12 thought that training on evaluation would help boards implement self evaluation. Applying the Chait et al. Model all comments were coded in the Educational Dimension. The following comment is representative of the perspectives of the interview participants regarding the need for training to assist boards.

There should be an education program on evaluation. The concept is not well understood. We need training on the purpose and how to do it right. NE1 Ex2

As was raised by some survey participants 6 interview participants spoke about the Board Chair playing an important role with respect to implementing board self evaluation. These participants also appear to believe that boards need to understand the value of self evaluation and the Chair has a role to play with helping the board see that value. Four of these participants were external and two were internal. Since the focus of these comments appeared to be on leadership I coded them in the Strategic Dimension of the Chait Model as well as the Educational Dimension. The three comments below are representative of the views of the six regarding the role of the Board Chair.

We definitely need training. The Chair needs to lead. He needs to show us the pros and cons and make sure we understand why it's important and what we need to do.

NE2 In1

First you have to believe it will make you a better board and that's the Chair's job. It comes down to leadership. (Pause) Convincing the board it's the right thing to do and that takes training and lots of discussion.

SE1 Ex1

We have to have the knowledge. I think courses like what I took at Rotman would help. I see it as my responsibility as Chair to help the board improve. That's why I took the courses and that's why I've set a goal to start evaluating our performance. NE1 Ex 1

One participant felt training and understanding the value of self evaluation was important but made an additional suggestion about hiring a facilitator to help with implementation.

You need to recognize the benefits of evaluation. I think training (umm) and (umm) and hiring a facilitator that is well versed in evaluation techniques to train the board and maybe facilitate the first time the board evaluates itself.

SE2 Ex1

**6. What do college board members believe would be beneficial to assist them to:
b) improve their board's current evaluation practices.**

While there were no questions on the survey that directly addressed this question 60.9% of survey respondents did indicate that their board's evaluation process needed improvement, 9.5% were uncertain and 5.7% checked the non-applicable option.

The interview data was the sole source of the findings to address this question. There was a fair degree of commonality among the answers from the participants on this question. I coded 7 of the 12 answers in the Educational Dimension of the Chait et al. Model as the participants appeared to focus on the roles of the board, arranging training, and looking at best practices. Five of these seven responses are from participants who are members of non evaluating boards. The following 4 quotes are representative of the seven responses.

I think you need to have a discussion on what the roles of the board are and measure that. (pause) You could also get a small committee formed and ask them to look at some best practices. NE 1 Ex 3

Well we don't evaluate but if we did I think looking at best practices and matching those to our needs would be helpful.
NE 2 Ex 1

You should be looking at the roles of the board, and then what should we evaluate and how can we improve? (pause)

Get training on board evaluation and um,um, ask how evaluation can make us more effective. NE1 Ex1

Hmm, probably what we are doing, we look at what other boards are doing, we search for best practices and then decide if we need to change our evaluation strategies, (pause) if the change will make us better. SE2 Ex2

One comment from an internal member of a board that does self evaluate was coded in the Analytical Dimension as well as the Educational Dimension as he seems to be suggesting that the board needs to analyze the results of an evaluation and plan to improve if the results indicate corrective actions are necessary.

You need to ensure you're not simply going through the motions. As a board member ask "what are we doing with the results? How do we use them in a constructive way?"

You need to look at the results, think about them and act on them or otherwise you're just going through the motions.

SE2 In1

Two comments, both from participants whose board self evaluates, were coded in the Interpersonal Dimension. The participants appeared to focus on the relationships among board members and developing trust and respect.

You need to set a culture where introspection is valued,
(umm) where there is a culture of trust and respect.(umm)
It's important that people feel safe. SE1 In1

Engage people, let them input to the things they think should
be evaluated. Encourage them to discuss things (pause) to get
to know each other. SE1 Ex2

Two comments were coded in the Strategic Dimension as the participants spoke about
focusing on strategic issues such as mission and ends statements.

I think it depends on what type of board you are. We are a
Carver type board so we focus on the ends and how we
contribute to those ends. (umm) You need to stay at the
strategic level. SE2 Ex1

A board has to focus on the core mission or mandate, that's
what important, so measure how the board helps the college
with its mission. NE2 Ex 2

One comment from a current board chair of a college board that self evaluates
was coded as Strategic and Contextual. This participant appears to not only be focused on
strategic issues but also contextual issues such as the board/president relationship and
college's values.

Certainly the board's goals and values need to be aligned with the president's and the institution as a whole and they should work in concert with each other to establish their strategic plan and implement their plan. (pause) The board as a whole should work closely with the president and executive staff to accomplish and meet the needs of the institution in a shared vision. (pause) Collectively each year the Board with the president should review their accomplishments and their targets they have established for themselves to see if they are on track. SE1 Ex1

7. How do the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college board members compare with results and recommendations found in the literature regarding board self evaluation?

This question will be addressed in depth in Chapter Five as the answer involves more analysis and interpretation than appropriate when reporting research findings. From a general perspective the following initial observations are made:

- 1) With the exception of one survey respondent all participants in this study appear to agree with the recommendations found in the literature that boards self evaluate.
- 2) Some participants in this study appear to have different views than those found in the literature regarding individual board member evaluation.

- 3) In the last few years there appears to be a very slight increase in the number of college boards self evaluating and this is similar to the trend reported in the literature.
- 4) The reasons for conducting board self evaluation indicated by participants in this study appear to match those found in the literature.
- 5) There appears to be a strong match between the Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Model and the participant's views regarding self evaluation.
- 6) The factors that may contribute to boards not self evaluating noted by this study's participants appear to be similar to those found in the literature.
- 7) Most participants appear to agree with the recommendations found in the literature with respect to allowing boards to develop or select their self evaluation processes and tools.
- 8) Not all participants in this study agreed with the recommendations found in the literature regarding reporting publicly on board self evaluation processes and results.
- 9) The participants' views on ways to improve board self evaluation practices appear to align with the recommendations found in the literature.

Summary

This chapter began with a statement of the research questions regarding Ontario college board members practices and perspectives on board self evaluation. A description of the data sources for each of the research methods employed in this study was presented. The Chait, Holland & Taylor (1996) Board Competency Framework, used to

assist with coding the participants' responses and grounding them to a conceptual framework was overviewed. Then the results were organized in order of the research questions and data source were presented.

The results demonstrate support for board self evaluation and provide insight from Ontario college board members with respect to reasons for conducting self evaluation, concerns about self evaluation, ways to encourage implementation of self evaluation and suggestions about improving current self evaluation practices. There appeared to be a high degree of affinity between the participant's responses and the Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Model. While there were differences between some recommendations found in the literature and some of the participants' views it appeared that most participants' views were similar to many of the recommendations. A minimum of analysis and interpretation was provided as the next chapter will provide a detailed discussion and summary of the findings.

Chapter V: Discussion, Implications and Conclusions

The main purpose of this research study was to examine the practices and perspectives of Ontario college board members with respect to board self evaluation. A mixed methodology approach, combining quantitative and qualitative methods was employed in this study. Document collection, a survey and interviews were the principal methods used to gather data. The Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Model was used to ground the participants' perspectives with a conceptual framework related to board self evaluation. While this study was primarily descriptive, that is seeking to discover "what is" it has elements of a causal relationship design as I sought to discover reasons why some boards self evaluate while others do not.

This study also added to the knowledge provided by the 2005 Deloitte Study of Ontario College Boards by updating the data regarding the current rates of Ontario college boards self evaluation practice and by offering more clarity on the rigour of those boards' self evaluation practices. Most importantly from my perspective, greater in-depth information on the personal beliefs of board members regarding evaluation practices was discovered. The findings of this study provide insights into why some boards do self evaluations while others do not. Recommendations are offered, based on the feedback from current college board members, that may:

- assist boards improve their self evaluation practices and
- assist non-complying boards to implement self evaluation practices

The balance of this chapter begins with a summary of the findings, followed by a discussion of the results and their possible implications organized by headings that reflect the study's subsidiary questions and that collectively answer the main research question:

What are the perceptions and practices of members of Ontario college boards regarding the board self evaluation? Then recommendations based on the findings will be presented followed by suggestions for future research, personal reflections and a summary.

Summary of Findings

In this section a brief overview of this study's findings is presented for the benefit of the reader. Following this overview the analysis and interpretations of those findings are discussed.

1. The survey results indicated that 53.4 % of the respondents thought their board formally self evaluated while 20.4 % thought their board informally evaluated and 26.2% reported their board did not self evaluate. Analysis of board documents related to self evaluation practices indicated 11 boards formally self evaluate, 6 informally self evaluate and 7 do not evaluate.
2. The survey results indicated that 98.1% support formal board self evaluations at least annually. The 12 interview participants were all supportive of formal board self evaluations.
3. The survey results indicated that 66.7% of respondents support self evaluation of individual board members, 27.6% do not and 5.7% were uncertain. The pattern of support for individual member self evaluation among the interview participants was similar to that of the survey respondents.
4. The most reported reasons for performing board self evaluation were continuous improvement, transparency and accountability, quality assurance, and strengthening the board/president relationship. Board members from non- self

- evaluating boards rated transparency and accountability much lower than board members from self evaluating boards.
5. The most reported reasons for boards not self evaluating were possible negative effects on interpersonal relationships and group dynamics, lack of knowledge about self evaluation, and a general fear of self evaluation.
 6. Both the survey results and the interview data indicated strong support for boards having the autonomy to decide what self evaluation processes to employ rather than being required to use a common set of board self evaluation processes.
 7. The most reported ways to assist boards to implement self evaluation were professional development, Board Chair requests board self evaluation, assistance by College Ontario, and group dynamics training.
 8. The survey results and interview data appear to indicate support for publicly reporting board self evaluation processes but not the results.
 9. The survey results indicated that approximately 55% of respondents felt their board's current self evaluation process helps their board perform effectively and at least 61% felt their board's self evaluation process needed improvement. The interview participant's suggestions for improving self evaluation processes appear to support the recommendations in the literature.
 10. The participants' perspectives appear to fit with the Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Model.

Discussion

In this section the findings, organized under topic headings that reflect this study's subsidiary questions, will be analyzed and interpreted. Taken as a whole, this analysis describes the practices and perspectives of Ontario college board members with respect to board self evaluation. The possible relevance of this study's findings to the findings from the literature on board self evaluation (Chapter II) will be discussed as each topic is presented. Following this section recommendations that address the implications for practice will be offered.

Ontario College Boards: Self Evaluation Practices

The findings regarding Ontario college boards self evaluation revealed that the majority of boards are conducting some form of self evaluation. In reviewing the board documents and related data collected for this study and applying the self evaluation definitions created for the purpose of this study I classified 11 boards as formally self evaluating, 6 boards as informally self evaluating and 7 boards as non- self evaluating. The survey results indicated that 53.4% felt their board formally self evaluated and 20.4% felt their board informally self evaluated.

In the 2005 Deloitte Study of Ontario College Boards 60% of respondents reported that their boards had a "formalized process to assess board performance". However it is important to note that Deloitte did not define the term "formalized process". It appears that by not offering a definition Deloitte may have confused the survey respondents as 17% of respondents checked the "uncertain" option for the question regarding board formalized assessments. The survey in the Deloitte Study involved all 24 Ontario

colleges and also included college senior staff who serve as resources to the boards, recent past board member as well as board members. While my study included data from all 24 colleges the survey phase involved 20 colleges. Given these and other differences in the variables between the Deloitte study and my study it is difficult to make direct statistical comparisons between the two studies however some observations are perhaps worth discussing.

There appears to be a similar number of Ontario college boards not self evaluating in the fall 2008 (Hanlon Study) as there were in the fall 2004 (Deloitte Study). The Deloitte Study results indicated that 23% of respondents felt their board did not self evaluate while my survey indicated that 26.2% of respondents reported that their board did not self evaluate. The study noted several strengths of college boards such as the collective expertise, experience and commitment of board members but identified board self evaluation as a significant area needing improvement. While one might hypothesize that a survey such as Deloitte's would raise awareness among board members about board self evaluation and that awareness might lead to an increased rate of board self evaluation it does not appear to have happened. Later in this chapter reasons regarding why boards don't self evaluate will be discussed. In that discussion it is noted that some interview participants suggested board lack of awareness as a possible reason for not self evaluating. While lack of awareness may be a reason it seems that it cannot be the primary reason otherwise one might expect to have seen a significant increase in the boards that self evaluate in 2008.

There are a significant number of Ontario college boards that still are not self evaluating and there is no available data that would indicate how many college boards

were self evaluating prior to 2004. However, it would seem that the incidence of board self evaluation among Ontario college boards is at least similar to boards in other sectors. For example, Nadler (2004) cites a University of Southern California survey of private sector organizations where 56% of respondents reported conducting board self evaluation and a 1995 study of Florida community college boards found that 53% self evaluated.

Second, it appears that even among the colleges that self evaluate more attention needs to be given to policy development related to self evaluation practices. Only 3 boards have stand alone policies on self evaluation and 8 boards have a statement on self evaluation within their governance model policy. Only 2 boards had a set of written procedures. It seems that boards rely on a college staff person, usually the secretary to board, to know and follow a procedure. Reliance on one person and a lack of documented procedures could lead to a lack of consistency from year to year and therefore the effectiveness of the self evaluation could be questionable.

Third, there was great variation in the breadth and depth of the self evaluation instruments being used. Some boards have very detailed, multi-paged instruments and others have instruments consisting of a few statements over 1 - 2 pages.

Respecting that governance scholars (Long, 2006; Minichilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007), professional associations (Ontario Hospital Association, 2005), and most participants in this study believe there is not a “one size fits all” board self evaluation process there is a recognition that evaluation instruments should be grounded to an established set of standards and/or an evaluation framework. Such standards and frameworks should be endorsed or recommended by governance scholars or professional

bodies with expertise in governance matters. Absence of such grounding may raise suspicions about the effectiveness of a board's self evaluation practices.

Fourth, there appears to be a lack of regular assessments of the effectiveness of board self evaluation practices. While one board chair did indicate in his interview that his board was reviewing the effectiveness of their evaluation instruments I could find no written statements among the board documents collected for this study that indicated any form of assessment of a board's self evaluation policies and instruments. This apparent lack of a systemic review by boards of their self evaluation practices may leave boards vulnerable regarding the effectiveness of their practices.

Fifth, only 1 college board provided evidence of tracking self evaluation results from year to year to assess how well the board was performing over time. The other college boards may be doing some sort of comparative analysis to previous evaluation results but in absence of written procedures it is hard to determine the level and sophistication of such analysis. Further, the lack of documented procedures again raises the issue of consistency in application of any analysis from one evaluation period to the next. One of the prime purposes of board self evaluation is to assist the board to improve its performance (Keil & Nicholson, 2005). It would seem that in order to achieve that purpose boards should be tracking and analyzing their self evaluation results from year to year to determine if they are in fact improving their performance.

Sixth, of the boards that do evaluate it appears that 6 boards conduct individual board member self evaluation and in all these cases the board member evaluates himself/herself. Only one of these boards asks the board member to self identify on the evaluation form and none of the boards appear to have any process in place to review on

an individual basis the self evaluation results with the board member. The purposes of these individual self evaluations appear to be to:

- i. stimulate board members to reflect on their own individual performance
- ii. identify areas of board performance that could improve
- iii. plan professional development to improve individual member performance as well as the board's performance

The question of evaluating individual board members will be addressed in greater depth later in this Chapter in the discussion of board member perceptions but it is noted here that most college boards' practices with respect to individual board member self evaluation do not follow the recommendations found in the literature. Governance scholars (Edwards, 2003; Kezar and Eckel, 2004; Nadler, 2004) strongly recommend that boards evaluate the performance of each of its members and remediate any areas that are identified as needing improvement. These scholars see a direct connection between individual board member performance and the overall performance of the board. It would appear that most Ontario college boards need to discuss this advice and consider ways of how each might apply this advice to each board's situation considering factors such as board values and governance style. Board self evaluation practices that do not include some assessment of individual board members may raise concerns about the effectiveness of the processes and instruments used.

The good news is that most Ontario college boards are practicing self evaluation. That said there is a lack of a system wide set of standards or framework that might assist those college boards to determine the effectiveness of their self evaluation practices. The bad news is that 7 Ontario college boards are not self evaluating although based on the

interview data it appears that two of those boards are considering implementing self evaluation in the coming year. Their reasons for this will be discussed in the following section.

Board Member Perceptions: Support for Self Evaluation

This study's findings demonstrate a huge level of support among Ontario college board members for boards to self evaluate. In response to the survey that involved 105 participants 98% indicated support for board formal self evaluation at least annually while all 12 participants, 6 of whom were from non-self evaluating boards, indicated support for board self evaluation. In the Deloitte survey, conducted November 2004, 84% of respondents indicated support for "annual formalized self-assessment" so it may be that support for board self evaluation has increased over the past 4 years. Despite this high level of support it is somewhat puzzling that there still remains 7 Ontario college boards that do not self evaluate and 6 that informally self evaluate. Based on the results from the two surveys it would appear that a lack of belief in board self evaluation is not a prime reason for boards to not evaluate their own performance. The possible reasons regarding not self evaluating and suggestions to implement board self evaluation practices from the perspective of board members will be presented later in this chapter.

Board Member Perceptions: Individual Board Member Performance

As noted above there is almost unanimous support for board self evaluation from participants in this study but a much different picture developed when participants were asked about evaluating individual member performance. Only 66.7% of respondents

indicated they supported evaluations of individual board members. The level of support for individual board member evaluations appears to have remained relatively constant over the past 4 years as 61% of respondents in the Deloitte survey supported individual evaluations. As noted earlier there is strong support in the literature amongst governance scholars for individual board member evaluations. Further, most resource manuals or guidelines for boards published by professional associations or government agencies such as Ontario Hospital Association and the British Columbia Board Resourcing and Development Office recommend that boards' self evaluation practices include assessment of individual member performance. Given the variance of views between governance experts and board members it may be helpful to understand some board members' reluctance to self evaluate. The comments from the participants in this study appear to provide insight into that reluctance.

Both survey participants and interview participants provided information that appears to not only give a deeper understanding of why some board members are resistant to individual evaluation but may also provide a basis for implementing ways to reduce that resistance. The Chait, Holland & Taylor (1996) Board Competency Framework was used to code participants' responses and ground the responses to a theoretical framework. The Interpersonal Dimension of this framework which addresses board group dynamics, interpersonal relationships and team work proved quite relevant when analyzing the participants' responses on the question of individual board member evaluation. Six comments from survey respondents and seven comments from interview participants were considered by me to fit in the Interpersonal Dimension of the framework. As illustrated by the following two quotes which are representative of the

comments made about individual evaluation, participants were concerned about possibly damaging both the interpersonal relations among board members and the board's group dynamics. The first quote is from a survey participant who is a member of a non-self evaluating board and the second quote is from an interview participant who is a member of a board that self evaluates.

...Assessment (i.e. measuring) and evaluation (i.e. making judgments based on assessment) require skill and sensitivity - especially when used for the purposes of peer evaluation. If done well, they can be powerful tools for supporting improved individual - and collective - performance; but, if done badly, they can cause bad feelings and resentment.

Personally I don't think it should happen. It could lead to people being intimidated. I have no problem with evaluating the board, the functions and so on. Now you have to keep everyone happy because you want them to speak out and say what's bothering them so if they feel they're going to be criticized for having a contrary opinion they may not say what's on their mind. I just don't think seating at a board table and discussing individual performance is a very productive or collegial situation.

Dowdy (1996) and Conger, Finegold and Lawler (1998) in their work with boards found that there was resistance to individual board member evaluations. They noted boards were concerned with the possible effects on collegiality and group dynamics which appear similar to the concerns that my study's participants voiced. The participants' responses to the questions about what would assist them to implement board self evaluation or to improve their current practices may provide insight regarding how to remediate those concerns. In the survey 86.5% of participants indicated professional development on evaluation would help boards implement self evaluation while 42.3% also felt professional development on effective group dynamics would assist boards. It may be that these respondents recognize that there is more to the successful application of self evaluation processes than just knowing the advantages and mechanics of various self evaluation models. As noted by Sonnenfeld (2002) boards must have well developed interpersonal skills to fulfill their roles and responsibilities and one of those responsibilities involves looking at one's own performance.

Based on my own experience of sitting on college boards, many not-for-profit boards and a private sector board I concur with Edwards (2003), Kezar and Eckel (2004) and Nadler (2004) that all board members must contribute for a board to be highly effective and that individual board member performance must be evaluated. There must be recognition that some members will need professional development and mentoring in order to perform their board duties effectively. As Edwards notes that responsibility falls to the board chair. The Organisation for Economic Cooperation (OECD) (2004) offers further support for individual board member evaluation when they observe that

governments expect that board monitoring processes include performance reviews of individual board members and that the board take corrective action when necessary.

Most comments from both survey and interview participants also included recommendations about professional development and looking at best practices. Using The Chait et al. (1996) Board Competency Model I grounded these comments to the Educational Dimension. Boards who are functioning well within this dimension not only want to understand their roles and responsibilities but how they can perform at a highly competent level. Chait et al. note these boards examine their performance both collectively and individually and seek training to improve their performance. In looking at board self evaluation best practices there are references to boards receiving training on interpersonal skills and group dynamics (Ontario Hospital Association, 2005; Edwards, 2003). In arguing for board self evaluation governance experts note that interpersonal skills and group dynamics are essential for effective board performance and that evaluations help identify and address inadequacies within boards regarding those areas (Nadler, 2004; Plumptre, 2006; Roberts, McNulty & Stiles, 2005;). It would appear that the human relations skills that a board needs to conduct its affairs properly are the same skills that it needs to overcome resistance to individual board member evaluations.

Further evidence that human relations skills are critical to the acceptance and success of individual board member evaluations may be found in comments from two interview participants who are both from a self evaluating board. These comments, coded in the Interpersonal Dimension, may be quite instructive for two reasons. The participants have served on a college board for over three years and that board evaluates its performance both at the collective level and the individual level so participants have

experience with individual board member evaluation and ways to overcome the barriers to it. They appear to support the belief that good interpersonal relationships and group dynamics are a way to increase the probability of boards not only having more effective self evaluation practices but also accepting individual board member evaluations.

You need to set a culture where introspection is valued, where there is a culture of trust and respect. It's important that people feel safe.

Engage people, let them input to the things they think should be evaluated. Encourage them to discuss things (pause) to get to know each other.

While the findings do reveal a resistance among some board members to evaluate individual members it would seem that there is still a promising opportunity for Ontario college boards to adapt individual board member evaluation. First, almost 67% of survey respondents agree with evaluating board members so there appears to be a base of support on which to build. Second, when asked if they would join a college board that evaluated individual board member performance 85.7% indicated they would while 7.6% were uncertain. It seems that, while there may be resistance to individual evaluation, in most cases it would not stop a person from joining a board that does evaluate its members. With effective professional development that includes training on interpersonal skills and group dynamics it appears most boards could overcome that resistance to the evaluation of board members. The role of the Board Chair in facilitating

evaluation discussions also appears to be very important and will be discussed later in this section.

Concern about interpersonal relations and board group dynamics appear to be the prime reason some board members are not supportive of individual board member evaluations but there were also 3 other reasons given by participants. First, in some of the comments from both survey and interview participants concern was voiced about the volunteer nature of college boards and that a board which evaluates its members may have difficulty recruiting new members. Conger et al. (1998) also noted board members were concerned about board member recruitment if a board evaluated its members. The quote from a board member of a board that does self evaluate its collective performance but does not evaluate its individual members illustrates the concern.

We are volunteers. It is hard enough (sic) to recruit new governors without adding barriers like individual evaluation.

From my own experience serving on a variety of boards in two different cities over the past 17 years I concur that recruiting new members with the necessary knowledge, skills and experience to volunteer boards is challenging. While the concern should be acknowledged I would suggest, based on the findings of this study, that boards spend time on board orientation, professional development and building a culture that enables effective evaluations of individual members rather than use this concern as an excuse not to evaluate board members.

The other concern noted by some respondents in this study appears to be related to a concern again also identified by Conger et al. who noted boards raised the question about how qualified board members were to evaluate each other. While respondents in

this study did not directly question the qualifications of their board peers with respect to evaluating their fellow board members they did comment on the complexity of evaluation because of the differences among board members and the need for performance standards.

One survey participant, an external board member from a self evaluating board, noted that external members may see their role differently from internal members inferring that internal members may be less objective than external members about decisions affecting college programs and services. This participant went on to suggest that this difference in roles makes evaluation of individual members difficult.

External members have a tendency(sic) to step up to the plate in those areas where internal members often are cheer leaders for the institution(sic) and find themselves in an awkward position to take certain stands on decisions. So it is far more difficult to evaluate each member yearly...

Two other respondents raised the issue that there must be performance standards for board members and that this is what should be evaluated.

I like the idea of individual member evaluation however it must be non-threatening and perhaps a self-evaluation against established standards. College A SE In1

The self evaluation of individual performance is more problematic because of the volunteer nature of the college boards. I would agree that self evaluation of individual

performance is essential however the volunteer membership with no clear expectation of performance makes this level of self evaluation difficult. There are no clear levels of performance given to board members. Many members would (sic) be making their self evaluation based on their own expectations. College W NE In1

Again rather than accept excuses not to evaluate board members, the focus needs to be on overcoming these possible barriers. The roles and responsibilities of Ontario college members are stated by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities and can be found in the Board Resource Manual issued by the Ontario College Compensation and Appointments Council. Additionally boards normally have a policy on governance that outlines board member roles and responsibilities. Board members are expected to fulfill those roles and responsibilities regardless of whether they are external or internal members. Boards can develop performance standards rooted in these roles and responsibilities for their members. It would seem that having an effective board member evaluation process that includes performance standards would help mitigate the concern about possible differences in roles between external and internal members.

Board Member Perceptions: Effectiveness of Board Self Evaluation Practice

Since the purpose of this study was to discover Ontario college board members' self evaluation practices and perceptions it seemed reasonable to ask participants to rate the effectiveness of their board's self evaluation policies and instruments. The intent was

not to determine how effective Ontario college board self evaluation practices are but rather to understand how board members viewed the effectiveness of their board's practices. It is beyond the scope of this study to provide an in-depth analysis of the effectiveness of current Ontario college board self evaluation policies and instruments. That said the data from the surveys and interviews and the analysis of the relevant board documents does lead to a few general observations regarding effectiveness. First, 60.9% of all survey respondents indicated that their board's current evaluation practice needed improvement. When asked if their board's current evaluation practice contributed to effective board performance 85.2% of participants from boards that formally self evaluated agreed but this rate dropped significantly to 38% among boards that informally self evaluated. These findings appear to correlate with the Deloitte finding that there is a need to improve current practices but in my study there appears to be more of a willingness of board members to do so as compared to the Deloitte Study. The Deloitte Study revealed two interesting but perhaps troubling findings. Of the respondents who indicated that their board did not self evaluate only 86% were supportive of introducing board evaluation processes and when given a list of 15 topics to be addressed in a board professional development program the topic of board self evaluation was ranked a distant last by the respondents.

Board Member Perceptions: Common Set of Evaluation Processes and Tools Versus the Autonomy to Choose

The findings seem to demonstrate a significant level of support for boards to have the autonomy to decide how and what will be evaluated with respect to board

performance. In the survey 76.2% of participants indicated that boards should decide which evaluation processes and tools to use based on their board's circumstances rather than be mandated to use a process and set of tools common to all college boards. This preference was even more pronounced among the interview participants as 11 of 12 preferred the freedom for boards to decide what evaluation process would work best for their board. The interview participants spoke about the differences among colleges. For example, colleges have different strategic goals which are based on the needs of the communities they serve. The needs of communities vary greatly across the province so it follows that the strategic plans of colleges that boards oversee would vary as well. Because of these differences interview participants felt that the board should be allowed to develop or select an evaluation process that best suits the board's needs. The following quote from an external member of a self evaluating board illustrates the point.

I think each board should develop their own. We're all in different circumstances. We're in a very different situation than a big Toronto college. Our goals are different, our make-up is different so, so how we evaluate ourselves should be different.

While there was strong preference for autonomy there also seemed to be willingness from some participants to have a common board evaluation framework or board evaluation models that boards could use to guide their decisions regarding self evaluation. A quote from an external member of a non self evaluating board is representative of this viewpoint.

I would be ok with a common framework but let's recognize we're all different so you must allow boards to customize to meet their needs. I think the only thing that should be mandated is that there be a board evaluation process.

The views expressed by the majority of participants in this study regarding a board's autonomy to determine its self evaluation processes and tools concur with the recommendations found in the literature (ASX Corporate Governance Council, 2007; Board Resourcing and Development Office – Province of British Columbia, 2005; Minichilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007).

An interesting point about assessing board performance based on a set of evaluation standards common to all college boards was made by an internal member of a college board that self evaluates. She expressed a concern that such an approach may lead to comparisons of college boards by the government and the public. She notes that such comparisons would not be fair because each board operates in different circumstances. She points to how the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) for Ontario colleges have been used for comparative purposes even though the government stated at the time of the inception of KPI's - and College Presidents agreed - that KPI's were not to be used to compare or rank colleges. Given the Ontario experience with KPI's this participant's view may not be unfounded. This point will be discussed further when addressing the next topic which is the public reporting of results.

Board Member Perceptions: Public Reporting of Board Self Evaluation Processes and Results

A strong majority of survey participants demonstrated support for public reporting of board evaluation processes as 70.5% agreed that the processes should be placed on the web. However when asked about reporting the board's evaluation results the survey respondents appeared to be evenly split as 45.2% were supportive, 46.2% were against and 8.7% were uncertain. Among the 12 interview participants 11 agreed that the processes could be published but only 4 supported publishing the results. The primary concerns, stated by the interview participants were a belief that the results would be used for comparison purposes among colleges and that the publishing of results may negatively affect board recruitment. The following quote from an internal member of A self evaluating board illustrates the point regarding board recruitment.

I'm not sure what that would accomplish, not sure if it would boost the public's opinion and worse it may cause good people not to join the board because they worry about being blamed if there were poor results. So I'm against it.

The results from the survey do not appear to support the rationale that new board member recruitment would be negatively affected if boards published their self evaluation results. When asked if they would join a board that published its evaluation results 77.6% of 105 survey participants indicated they would, 11.7% were uncertain and only 10.7% indicated they would not. It seems that, although almost half the respondents

did not support publishing the evaluation results, it would not stop them from joining a board that did publish its results. There is support in the literature for the publication of self evaluation processes (ASX Corporate Governance Council 2007; Bandsuch, Pate and Thies, 2008; London Stock Exchange, 2004) and the results (Bandsuch et al.; Edwards 2003).

As they did in responding to the question about a common set of evaluation processes participants stated comparisons would be unfair as each board operates in different environments as demonstrated in the quote from an external member of a non-self evaluating board.

It may lead to comparisons. Like I said before each board works in different circumstances so we shouldn't compare. The purpose should be to make the board more effective. The public doesn't need to know the results but only that there is a rigorous process.

Based on my own experience in the Ontario College System these concerns about possible comparisons of results are probably well founded. Since the mid-nineties colleges are required by the Ontario Government to publish their KPI's results and all meet this requirement by posting the results on their websites. Ironically, the colleges themselves may have created the situation where students, the public and others compare one college to another based on KPI's. When KPI's were first introduced some colleges decided to use the results for marketing purposes even going as far as renting billboard space to "brag" they were number one in a particular KPI. This led to

other colleges beginning similar marketing activities and the “comparison war” began. While respecting some board members’ opinion on this matter, the fear of comparisons with other boards does not seem to be a strong reason not to publish results. That said there is validity in the argument that each college is different. Each has its own corporate culture and each operates in communities that are different from each other economically, demographically, culturally, politically and geographically. If any comparison on board evaluation results were to be done it would most likely be by the government or boards themselves wanting to benchmark their performance against peer boards. In either situation allowances can and should be made for the different circumstances in which each board operates.

Two participants were concerned that publishing the results may cause boards to develop self evaluation processes that ensured positive results so as to avoid criticism. The following quote from an external member of a self evaluating board illustrates this concern.

People may not understand or start to draw the wrong conclusions because they don’t have all the information. So it could cause boards to not be as critical as they should be because they know they have to share the results, so better to discuss it in-camera.

Although expressed by only two participants this concern needs to be considered when boards or governments and regulatory authorities are contemplating policy regarding the publishing of evaluation results. Similar concerns have been expressed by educators as they debate the publishing of students standardized test results by school.

One of the many arguments against standardized tests which is fuelled further when schools are required to publish the results is that teachers begin to “teach to the test”. The participants in this study are suggesting that if a board was required to publish results then it might design a “test” that produces positive results or is so superficial as to be meaningless in terms of helping the board improve its performance. When analyzed together with this study’s participants’ preference for board autonomy regarding evaluation processes and the belief that the prime purpose of board self evaluation is to improve performance (Kiel & Nicholson, 2005; Nadler, 2004; Plumpre, 2006), that is a formative approach rather summative, then it would appear there is more to be gained by not publishing results. In fact, Nadler warns of the danger of boards simply going through the motions to meet the requirements found in guidelines on self evaluation. Requiring a board to publish the results of its performance review may exacerbate that situation. That said, if a board wants to publish its results then it should be free to do so and there are some participants in this study who support such publication.

Four participants were supportive of publicly reporting their board’s self evaluation results because it demonstrates accountability. One participant, an internal board member, elaborated that it would help her with her particular constituency group.

Yes because it demonstrates a level of accountability. In my case I could use them to deal with skeptical faculty members.

These participants correctly identify that boards must be concerned with accountability. However, there are a variety of ways for boards to be accountable to constituents without publishing evaluation results. In fact one participant made that very

point. Holding open board meetings, limiting in-camera sessions, publishing financial statements and reports on achievement of goals and objectives and making board policies and procedures public are just a few ways that boards can be accountable as well as transparent. Boards could enhance both their accountability and transparency by publishing their self evaluation process. As noted earlier this action is supported by most participants in this study and the literature findings. Further, it would mitigate the concerns expressed about publishing results while still enabling boards to be accountable and transparent. Bodies with regulatory authority or advisory functions such as the Australian Stock Exchange, the London Stock Exchange and the OECD recommend that boards publish their process to meet accountability and transparency expectations. In British Columbia public sector boards are required to publish their self evaluation process or explain how the board knows it is performing satisfactorily (Board Resourcing and Development Office – Province of British Columbia, 2005).

The next section will discuss the perceptions of Ontario board members regarding why boards do or do not self evaluate and their suggestions about implementing or improving board self evaluation practices. First, the reasons why boards self evaluate will be presented followed by implementation and improvement suggestions that were offered by board members who participated in this study. Then, board members' views on the reasons why some boards don't self evaluate will be discussed along with recommendations to address those reasons. The recommendations are grounded in the suggestions given by board members regarding how to assist boards to implement board self evaluation or to improve existing self evaluation practices.

Board Member Perceptions: Why Boards Self Evaluate?

Knowing from a board member's perspective the reasons for board self evaluation may be instructive when considering ways to encourage non-self evaluating boards to implement self evaluation. If there are clear indicators of what board members feel are relevant regarding self evaluation then this information could be used, for example, to design professional development activities on board self evaluation. While rationale provided in the literature is important and helpful, unless board members agree and see the rationale as relevant to their situation the probabilities of implementation are poor. On a positive note there appears to be a strong correlation between the perceptions of this study's participants and the views found in the literature regarding reasons for board self evaluation.

In this study continuous improvement was the most popular reason for self evaluation as it was listed by 98.6% of participants. The continuous improvement theme was also quite prevalent in the survey comments and interviews. Regardless of whether a participant served on a self evaluating board or non-self evaluating board, whether they were an external or internal board member they listed continuous improvement as the prime reason for self evaluation. Governance scholars, such as Kiel & Nicholson (2005) and Nadler (2004), note that boards must strive to improve performance and believe that self evaluation practices are a critical part of any board's efforts to function better. Focusing on the value of self evaluation to help boards improve performance may be a key tactic when seeking to have a board embrace self evaluation. While continuous improvement was ranked almost unanimously by the participants, transparency and accountability as well as quality assurance were also highly ranked reasons in this study.

Bandsuch, Pate and Thies (2008) suggest the need for boards to be transparent is much greater today than in previous decades due to the many corporate failures and scandals. King (2007), writing specifically on governance and accountability in higher education, notes that boards of higher education institutions must be attentive to accountability and quality assurance responsibilities. The majority of participants in this study agree but the findings indicate that some members from non-self evaluating boards may feel somewhat differently about transparency and accountability.

Transparency and accountability were rated second to continuous improvement with 85.7% of participants listing it as a reason to self evaluate. Quality assurance was a very close third with 82.2% of respondents selecting it. These results mirrored the findings from the analysis of the survey comments and interview data. Recognizing the interview sample size was small, no significant differences were observed between interview participants from self evaluating and non-self evaluating boards on these reasons to evaluate. There was no significant difference between survey participants from self evaluating and non-self evaluating boards regarding quality assurance however, there was a significant difference regarding transparency and accountability. The findings indicate that 92.1% of self evaluating board participants selected transparency and accountability compared to 66.7% of non-self evaluating board participants. When external and internal member results were analyzed the selection of transparency and accountability was almost identical varying by less than one percent so the noticeable difference in perception about the relationship of transparency and accountability seems to be isolated to self evaluating board members and non-self evaluating board members. The implication of this finding is that it may provide further insight into why some

boards don't self evaluate. There are a few possible reasons for this difference but two may be the most relevant to this discussion.

Some may argue that the difference has less to do with board members' attitudes toward transparency and accountability and more to do with non-evaluating board members not seeing self evaluation as a means to demonstrate those responsibilities. Looking at another difference between the two groups may suggest that there is a difference in attitude at least among some non-self evaluating board members regarding transparency and accountability. The findings show 60% of self evaluating board members selected role modeling as a reason to self evaluate while 44% of non-self evaluating board members made a similar selection. This may indicate that board members from non-self evaluating boards perceive their roles differently than self evaluating board members regarding their board's responsibilities to its constituents both internally and externally. If many non-self evaluating board members don't see themselves as role models to the college, their internal constituents, then perhaps they may also view their transparency and accountability responsibilities to their external constituents differently as well. More research to confirm or dismiss this finding is required but in the interim it would appear that educating non-self evaluating boards about their accountability role and its relationship to board self evaluation may contribute to more boards examining their own performance.

The survey results also indicated that 57% felt self evaluation contributed to a better relationship between the board and the president with a larger percentage of internal board members ranking this reason higher than external members. Governance experts such as Carver and Carver (2001) and Ingram & Weary (2000) as well as professional

associations such as Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges (2007) recommend that the board link their self evaluation processes with that of the president. By doing so the board is increasing the probability of a productive relationship between the president and itself as well as reducing the probability of confusion over roles and responsibilities between the two. This study did not determine how many Ontario college boards actually coordinate their self evaluation process with the evaluation process of the president but it is encouraging to see that at least half the participants appear to see the value in doing so. Boards that have been practicing self evaluation but not connecting their process to the president's evaluation may want to consider doing so as the literature findings (Conger et al., 1998; Nadler, 2004) suggest that such action can improve the performance of the board and its president. Further evidence that the board should be attentive to the board/president relationship emerged from comments made in the survey.

The comments were made by three survey participants who were internal board members. Each was from a different board and each of these boards practiced self evaluation. These participants infer that board self evaluation may mitigate or prevent situations where a board becomes so comfortable with its president that it neglects its roles and responsibilities. Two similar comments about an over-dependence on the president were made by interview participants who were external members from non-self evaluating boards in responding to a question about why boards don't self evaluate. As noted above, by having the evaluations of the board and president linked it may help ensure the board/president relationship remains professional and productive and lessen the possibility of misunderstandings about the roles and responsibilities of each party.

Before turning to a discussion of board members' views with respect to implementing or improving board self evaluation one other finding should be highlighted not because it was highly ranked but because it wasn't. While 17% of survey participants felt a government or regulatory requirement was a reason to self evaluate, perhaps more informative was the result that only 11% of non-self evaluating board participants selected it as a reason. It would appear that requirements by external bodies with authority are not a compelling reason for boards to self evaluate. This interpretation is further supported by this study's finding that despite a requirement by the Ontario Government for college boards to self evaluate seven boards are not complying. As noted in Chapter IV, after the Chairs of the two non-self evaluating boards were selected for the interview phase of this study, it was discovered that they were trying to introduce self evaluation to their boards. Neither was motivated by government regulation, rather both saw the value of self evaluation in helping their board improve its performance. From the analysis of the survey and interview results it would appear that in looking at ways to encourage boards to self evaluate focusing on benefits which are more intrinsic such as continuous improvement and demonstrating accountability appeals to many more boards than an extrinsic push such as government regulation.

College Board Member Perceptions: Implementing or Improving Self Evaluation

In this section the views of Ontario college board members regarding how to implement board self evaluation as well as how to improve current practices will be discussed. The discussion will begin with the perceptions of board members on helpful ways to implement self evaluation.

Professional Development on self evaluation was the preferred choice to assist boards as it was selected by 86.5% of participants. There also appeared to be recognition by many in this study that professional development should also include other knowledge and skills that board members need to effectively participate in evaluation exercises as 42% of survey participants selected professional development on group dynamics. A further advantage of such professional development is that the knowledge and skills acquired would also help the board perform its other roles more effectively. Other suggestions offered that I classified as professional development type activities were examining best practices, taking governance courses, conference workshops, and hiring facilitators/trainers.

The importance of the board chair again surfaced in the analysis of the data. In the survey 51% of the participants indicated it would be helpful if the board chair requested the board to implement self evaluation. The survey and interview comments also demonstrated that some board members believed the chair could assist by introducing the topic and leading the discussion on the advantages of board self evaluation. As one board chair commented in his interview, "I see it as my responsibility as Chair to help the board improve...that's why I've set a goal to start evaluating our performance". The literature (Leblanc & Gillies, 2005; Minchilli, Gabrielsson & Huse, 2007) supports the views expressed about the role of chair regarding implementing self evaluation. In this discussion of the role of the board chair it is interesting to note that the president's influence appears to be minimal as only 11.5% of survey participants indicated a request by the president as helpful in the implementation of self evaluation. This finding was

surprising to me and I will discuss it in greater depth in the Personal Reflections section later in this Chapter.

While it is clear that the chair has an important role to play regarding self evaluation this study's findings also indicate sources of assistance for the chair. Colleges Ontario was selected by almost half the participants as an organization that could assist boards implement self evaluation. This finding contrasts with only 27% selecting the College Compensation and Appointments Council (CCAC) which is a body established by the Ontario government and its mandate includes assisting college boards with governance issues. Colleges Ontario is an association of the Ontario colleges funded by the colleges and its prime mandate is advocacy and policy development. Given the mandates of each organization one might have expected the CCAC to have been selected by more board members in this study. The explanation may be that Colleges Ontario has a higher profile with board members because it offers new board member orientation sessions annually, sends regular communications such as monthly newsletters to board members, holds an annual conference on college issues that board members attend and has a governance and committee structure that includes college board members from across the province. Another explanation may be that board members have a higher comfort level with Colleges Ontario because it was created by the colleges and funded by the colleges whereas the CCAC is seen as an arms-length agency of the government. Regardless of the reasons for a preference towards Colleges Ontario the important point is that many board members are open to outside assistance in helping boards begin self evaluation. This willingness to seek assistance provides an opportunity for Colleges Ontario to take a more proactive stance regarding facilitating not only self evaluation

implementation but also delivering on-going professional development on board self evaluation best practices. A comment made by a survey participant further illustrates the last point.

The participant suggested Colleges Ontario encourage boards to self evaluate and then to benchmark their performance against boards that are “doing well”. Given the level of support expressed in the survey for assistance from Colleges Ontario this suggestion may have some merit. The question of who is “doing well” in regards to selecting boards against which to benchmark against could be left to Colleges Ontario. Rather than select particular boards Colleges Ontario could develop a framework of best practices benchmarks that a board could reference and then decide based on its circumstances which benchmarks to use.

Two suggestions, the first from a member of a non-self evaluating board and the second from a member of a self evaluating board take a very proactive stance. The first comment is also relevant to the possible role Colleges Ontario plays regarding the professional development of board members. This board member proposes that board self evaluation training be included as a part of the orientation for new governors. The second suggestion involves boards adding experience with and acceptance of board self evaluation as a criteria for new board member selection. These two suggestions complement each well albeit with a slight modification.

Having Colleges Ontario add a module on board self evaluation as part of its orientation program appears to be quite feasible and, if properly delivered, should help boards with conducting effective board self evaluations. I believe the second suggestion requires modification. Including acceptance of board self evaluation practices as part of

the board's selection criteria makes sense if a board is committed to evaluating its own performance and that of its members. However, requiring new board members to have experience with board self evaluation appears overly restrictive, especially given the concerns articulated by some board members, about the challenges of recruiting new members. If potential new board members are lacking board self evaluation experience it would seem that the onus should be on the board to arrange the appropriate professional development for those who are amenable to self evaluation practice and have the other knowledge, skills and experience the board is seeking.

The discussion will now look at suggestions that seem to imply a more directive and punitive approach. One survey participant suggested making board self evaluation mandatory however that suggestion does not appear to be useful for two reasons. First the Ontario government has already made it mandatory (Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, 2003b) and secondly, as reported earlier, only 11% of participants from non-self evaluating indicated government requirement as a reason to evaluate board performance. Two board members commented that there should be consequences or repercussions for not self evaluating. Their comments appear directed at their own boards but give rise to the question of consequences at the government level. Given that this study found that seven college boards are not complying with the government's directive to self evaluate this question may merit some discussion.

As noted in the literature, governments and regulatory bodies tend to allow boards some flexibility about compliance such as the "comply or explain" approach in Britain (Financial Reporting Council, 2006, p.1) and self regulation strategies (King, 2007; Salter & Tanner, 2000). These types of approaches regarding compliance with regulations or

adherence to guidelines are seen as balancing the needs of regulatory or advisory bodies to protect the board's stakeholders while giving some flexibility in how organizations adapt specific guidelines. This study's findings do suggest there should be some type of follow up by the Ontario government on its requirement for board self evaluation. In the spirit of "comply or explain" the government could require colleges to make a statement on self evaluation in their annual reports which are required to be sent to the Ministry and placed on college websites. Another option that would have more impact is to make board self evaluation part of the multi-year accountability agreements (MYAA's) between the colleges and the government. These agreements require colleges to outline how they are going to improve quality and access. In these agreements the government sets out its expectations but leaves the ways as to how those expectations are achieved to the institutions and their boards. The board chair and the president must sign the MYAA and the Minister, Training, Colleges and Universities must approve the MYAA before the government releases funding to the college or university. While including a board self evaluation reporting requirement in MYAA's would result in boards self evaluating it may not result in boards doing so for the right reasons. The unintended consequence could be some boards going through perfunctory motions so funding is not lost rather than engaging in effective and meaningful self evaluation practices that improves the performance of the board and the college. With that unintended consequence in mind it seems that a version of "comply or explain" may not only be more accepted by boards but also achieve the desired result. It is not the intent of this study to make recommendations to government and the foregoing was offered to look at the pros and cons of government intervention. The best outcome would be for college boards to

voluntarily accept a “comply or explain” approach or risk the serious consequences as noted by King (2007) when governments are forced to intervene. Now the discussion will turn to board members’ perceptions on how to improve a board’s current self evaluation practices.

The data from the interviews provided insight from a board member perspective on what boards might consider when looking at ways to improve in the area of self evaluation. There was a fair degree of congruency between improvement suggestions and implementation suggestions. The interview participants focused on the roles of board, professional development and examining best practices.

Interview participants from both self evaluating and non-self evaluating boards suggested that boards should be discussing the roles of the board and measuring their performance against those roles. There are many examples in the literature (Chait, Ryan, & Taylor, 2005; Kiel & Nicholson, 2005; Minichelli et al., 2007) that note this type of dialogue among board members does contribute to more effective self evaluation. One participant noted that these discussions have to be meaningful, that the results have to be used in “constructive” ways to improve board performance otherwise “you’re just going through the motions”. Nadler (2004) and Sonnefeld (2002) would support this view as they strongly encourage boards to go beyond minimal evaluation requirements and engage in thoughtful discussions of how and what to self evaluate and how to use the results to improve. In my own experience I have found that such discussions have led to board members having a better understanding of their roles and then taking concrete steps to improve on their roles both at a board and individual level. For example, as a result of discussions before and after a board self evaluation last year my college’s board

determined it could do better on its advocacy role and took several actions to improve its performance in that area.

A related suggestion that is also supported in the literature (Chait, Holland & Taylor, 1996; Sonnefeld, 2002) concerns focusing on the importance of having good group dynamics at the board table. Participants talked about needing to have a culture of trust and respect. Sonnefeld proposes that a key element for “great boards” is not the structure but rather the board’s social skills. By this he means board members’ abilities to trust and respect each other so that they can constructively confront each other’s opinions on issues before the board. He sees board self evaluation as one of the critical steps to develop those skills.

Looking at self evaluation best practices was cited by several of the interview participants as a way to improve. Such actions are fairly common when a group or organization is seeking to improve its performance and are recommended by organizations that provide expert advice on governance issues such as Deloitte Touche. As noted earlier Colleges Ontario could play a significant role in self evaluation and another step it could take would be to develop a reference document on self evaluation best practices for boards to consult.

The final point that was made by some participants to improve current practices was for their board to link its self evaluation to its strategic plans. It was suggested that the board should measure how it is contributing to the achievement of its college’s mission and goals. This point may be considered a further refinement of the point on discussing the board’s general roles. Overseeing the development and implementation of the organization’s strategic plan and monitoring it is a key role for a board (Chait et al.,

2005; Minichilli et al., 2007). These scholars and others recommend that boards measure their contributions to achieving their institution's strategic plan. Boards have many roles and being stewards of the strategic plan is viewed as a key role. An additional advantage of highlighting the board's role with the strategic plan is that it is congruent with views found in the literature on linking the board's self evaluation with the president's evaluation. Hence the probabilities of an effective board/president relationship are increased. As a president who now works with a board that does connect its self evaluation process with the president's evaluation process but in the past has worked with boards that didn't self evaluate or did but kept its process separate from the presidents, I can attest that the connection does contribute to a better relationship. There is a clearer delineation and better understanding of each other's respective roles as a consequence of the discussions that emanate from the evaluation processes and results. Simply put, the board and the president become more of a team whose ultimate goal is the achievement of the college's strategic plan. This study did not fully explore the board/president relationship and the connection with the evaluation practices of each so I will be recommending further research on this topic from the perspective of board members and presidents.

Board Member Perceptions: Why Boards Don't self Evaluate?

The perceptions of board members regarding why boards self evaluate and board members' advice about self evaluation implementation and improvement strategies are valuable but an understanding of why boards don't self evaluate is also necessary. The literature has many articles on why boards should evaluate their own performance. Some

studies such as Conger, Finegold, and Lawler (1998) have examined board best practices including self evaluation but I could find no studies that focused on why boards do not self evaluate. Conger et al. did note there was resistance to evaluation of individual board members and suggested reasons for this however their study did not examine the views of board members about why boards do not self evaluate. The data from my study begins to open a window into the views of board members regarding why some boards don't self evaluate. These insights are helpful when considering ways to encourage boards to self evaluate but it is recognized that more research on this particular question is required in order to validate these findings and to further refine recommendations regarding board self evaluation.

In this section I have synthesized the findings from the survey participants' comments and interview data noted in Chapter IV into seven possible reasons regarding why boards don't self evaluate. The recommendations, offered to overcome the concerns stated, are grounded in the perceptions of this study's participants about why boards self evaluate and their advice regarding implementing or improving board self evaluation as well as the literature findings.

First, most participants who commented on this issue were concerned that self evaluations could have a negative effect on board group dynamics and interpersonal relations. Conger et al. (1998) also identified these same concerns in their research of board evaluation practices. The comments from this study's participants point to the need for board professional development on self evaluation to include training on managing group dynamics and how to constructively give and receive feedback. The findings from this study also suggest that Ontario college board members would be

receptive to professional development. Sonnefeld (2002) reinforces the need for these kinds of social skills in order for boards to perform effectively.

Second and closely related to the first reason is what I categorized as a natural fear of evaluation. Regardless of how confident one is, few of us get elated when faced with being evaluated. Even in strictly formative evaluation situations or evaluation situations where the outcomes are expected to be positive there is a degree of stress for the individual or group being evaluated (Adler & Towne, 2001). It would appear that board members have the same stress. Participants expressed concerns about embarrassment over possible negative results, hurt feelings and the effect these would have on the relationships among board members.

Third, a lack of awareness of board self evaluation practices and the related benefits may be a factor. A few participants suggested their board didn't evaluate simply because the topic was never raised. While this rationale may appear overly simplistic it never the less represents the perceptions of some college board members and reflects my own experience serving on several boards in the public and not for profit sectors and one board in the private sector. Until someone raises the topic - usually the chair or C.E.O. - boards don't think about it or perhaps are subconsciously avoiding it.

The fourth reason is closely related to lack of awareness and appears to be the converse of a reason given to self evaluate. Just as one of the reasons given to self evaluate relates to an understanding of the value of self evaluation, not understanding or underestimating the value could be a reason some boards don't self evaluate. This differs from a lack of awareness. In this case board members may be aware of self evaluation practices but don't adopt self evaluation because they don't see the benefits that it

provides. In analyzing some comments from non-self evaluating board members where they offered alternatives to formal self evaluation it appeared to me that these board members may not fully understand that the results of a properly conducted formal self evaluation can be used for several constructive purposes. Professional development on self evaluation and continuous improvement would help overcome this barrier however another important factor that could be a barrier or a solution was identified. In looking at ways to mitigate the second, third and fourth reasons leads to a fifth possible reason that boards don't self evaluate, that being the board chair.

Both in the survey and the interviews the role of the chair to help implement and successfully manage board self evaluation practices was identified. Governance scholars such as Kiel and Nicholson (2005) and Huse (2007) believe that part of the chair's leadership responsibilities is to ensure that the board has an effective self evaluation system in place. The Board Chair also has an important role to play regarding managing the group dynamics of the board (Leblanc & Gillies, 2005). In this study it was discovered that the Chairs of the two non-self evaluating boards are attempting to introduce board self evaluation. In both cases the Chairs had been influenced by a course each had taken on governance. While others on the board or college senior staff may have made the same suggestion to the board it would seem that the responsibility for having board self evaluation rests with the Chair. Furthermore, as evidenced by the findings in this study and the literature the likelihood of a board accepting self evaluation is probably much higher if the Chair suggests it rather than staff. The probability of success also increases if the chair leads a process that includes professional development not only on evaluation practices but also on the benefits of evaluation as well as the

necessary skills that board members need to ensure successful implementation. Conversely if the Chair is not supportive then the probability of a board embracing self evaluation is diminished. The findings of this study seem to suggest that focusing on professional development for the board chair may be quite beneficial to helping boards implement self evaluation.

The sixth reason is presented with the recognition that it was raised by two members of the same non-self evaluating board and that its remediation would also involve the board chair. In the survey comments one participant voiced a concern about the cost and additional work associated with board self evaluation. The interview participant voiced this concern not as his own rather as reflecting the opinion of another on his board. Similar to some of the other reasons given by board members to not evaluate it is tempting to simply dismiss this concern as having no validity. However, to do so would be a mistake. In this case the potential power and influence of dissenting board members is highlighted. Introducing board self evaluation to a non-self evaluating board means introducing change. Part of successful change management includes assessing all areas of resistance to the proposed change (Gardner, 2006). Then the change leaders must prepare and present a rationale that either convinces resisters that their views are incorrect or the value of the change outweighs the costs. Even if such a tactic doesn't change the opinion of the resisters it greatly enhances the probabilities of mitigating the resisters' influence on others. The chair, as the leader of the board, has a responsibility to manage change hence another component of professional development relevant to the chair would be change management.

The seventh and last reason is connected to the relationship between the board and the president and again appears to be the converse of one of the reasons given by participants for boards to self evaluate. As noted earlier some participants felt self evaluation helped the board avoid an unhealthy dependence on the president. However, some participants felt that boards may not self evaluate because the board believes the president is doing a good job of leading and managing the organization and therefore the board doesn't need to worry about its own performance. Circuitously, such a view validates the perception of the board members who feel board self evaluation contributes to a healthy relationship between the board and the president. There must be checks and balances on the president and an effective board self evaluation process integrated with the president's evaluation would help provide those safeguards. Additionally professional development that addressed the benefits of self evaluation as well as distinctions between the roles of the board and the president would help boards to not inadvertently relinquish their responsibilities to the president.

By examining both the rationale given by board members to evaluate their board's performance as well as the possible reasons board members state for boards not self evaluating provides a rich data base from which to design more effective strategies to assist boards adopt or improve evaluation practices. As discussed throughout this section the findings of this study could be used to develop effective professional development activities and change management tactics that enhance the probability of the successful implementation of board self evaluation practices. A summary of the recommendations to improve board self evaluation practices for Ontario college boards is grounded in the views of college board members and the data found in the literature will now be

presented. A discussion on the relationship of the Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Model to this study's findings, limitations of this study's findings, suggestions for future research, and personal reflections will follow the recommendations.

Implications for Practice: Recommendations to Improve Ontario College Boards'

Self Evaluation Practices

These recommendations are respectfully offered for the consideration of boards and others who have an interest in improving governance practices within the Ontario college system. I also hope that recommendations one through eleven may be of interest and helpful to boards outside the Ontario college system.

Based on the findings of this study and the beliefs of governance scholars that formal board self evaluation does improve board performance it is recommended that:

1. Boards formally self evaluate.
2. Each board regularly assess its current self evaluation practices to determine how effective those practices are and take any necessary corrective action.
3. Each board document their self evaluation process and instruments in its Board Policy and Procedures Manual.
4. Each board develop or select a self evaluation process that is congruent with its own circumstances and is grounded to a set of standards and/or evaluation framework that has been developed or recommended by governance scholars or professional bodies with expertise in governance matters.

5. Each board track and review its self evaluation results from year to year to determine if board performance is improving.
6. Each board's self evaluation practices include evaluation of individual board member performance.
7. The board's and president's evaluation processes are integrated specifically in the areas of mission and strategic goal achievement and the roles of each in achieving those goals.
8. Each board focus on the intrinsic values of self evaluation such as continuous improvement and accountability when rationalizing why it self evaluates.
9. Board professional development include training on managing group dynamics and how to constructively give and receive feedback.
10. The board chair receive professional development on change management and the benefits of board self evaluation.
11. Each board describe in its annual report its self evaluation process or if the board does not self evaluate explain why.
12. Colleges Ontario promote and facilitate formal board self evaluation through new board member orientation, relevant professional development activities and development of a resource manual with self evaluation best practices frameworks and benchmarks.

The Relevance of the Chait, Holland and Taylor (1996) Board Competency Model

Chait et al. suggest their findings indicate that the institutions that had boards who actively sought to develop and/or improve its competencies in these six areas were more

successful. Their Board Competency Framework consists of 6 board competencies they termed as “dimensions of effective trusteeship”. These competency areas are:

Contextual Dimension – board members are expected to have an understanding of the organization’s purpose, values and culture.

Educational Dimension – board members are expected to have an understanding of the work of the organization and the board’s roles and responsibilities.

Interpersonal Dimension – the board is expected to create an environment of trust where members can constructively debate issues respecting sometimes divergent points of view but recognizing collectively they must act in the best interest of the organization.

Analytical Dimension – the board is aware that issues before it are complex and require thoughtful, constructive debate where various points of view are recognized and synthesized.

Political Dimension – board members recognize their responsibility to nurture healthy relationships with the various stakeholders that the organization serves or with whom they interact.

Strategic Dimension – the board ensures that the organization has a strategic vision and strategies to achieve that vision.

There are a variety of board competency and evaluation frameworks. I chose this model for two reasons. First, the framework appears quite relevant to my study; the framework was developed as a result of an empirically based study of public college boards in the United States and later expanded to other non-profit organizations. Second, the focus of my study was the perceptions of board members with respect to board self evaluation. I was particularly interested in why a board self evaluated or if it didn’t, the

reasons for not self evaluating. The Chait et al. Framework's focus on competencies, that is "The What", when considering evaluation appeared to me to be more appropriate to the purpose of my study. Other frameworks such as Kiel and Nicholson (2005) are more focused on how to conduct board self evaluation. Looking at board members perceptions on why boards self evaluate or don't generally leads to "The What" rather than "The How".

This model proved quite helpful in coding the survey participant's comments and the interview transcripts. While the purpose of my study was not to test the applicability of the Chait et al. model to Ontario college boards governance requirements it appears that model aligns well with the views of the participants in my study. All six dimensions were drawn upon in analyzing the data. The reasons given by participants to self evaluate were mapped to all six dimensions with most comments coded in the educational, interpersonal and political dimensions. The reasons given for not self evaluating were coded in the educational and interpersonal dimensions. This finding is not too surprising as the most visible work of board members involves knowing their roles and responsibilities, what the college does, interacting with each other and serving the college's stakeholders.

The contextual, analytical and strategic dimensions were also referenced but to a lesser degree. It may be that the work of the board associated with these dimensions occurs less frequently in comparison to the educational, interpersonal and political dimensions and hence is not "top of mind" when a board member is asked "why self evaluate?". The work done within the contextual, analytical and strategic dimensions is arguably the most important work of the board and I caution that the results of my study

should not be interpreted as Ontario board members not paying attention to the higher order cognitive work (Chait et al.) involved with these three dimensions. For example, if I had asked board members what they thought were the most important responsibilities of a board the incidence of responses mapped to the contextual, analytical and strategic may have been much higher.

The only set of responses that did not seem to align well with the Chait et al. Framework were the comments made about the Board/President relationship. While Chait et al. do briefly discuss the board/president relationship in their book “Improving the Performance of Governing Boards” that discussion is separate from the competency dimensions. Regardless, I believe boards would find the framework quite helpful in either developing a self-evaluation process or assessing the effectiveness of an existing process. That said, a board should not restrict itself to one particular model but examine several and match the elements of each against its own circumstances.

Limitations of this Study’s Findings

The findings of this study should not be generalized to boards outside the Ontario college system. Since the study was directed at Ontario college boards whose selection methods for members and governance type may differ from college boards in other jurisdictions, as well as not for profit boards in general, it will be left to interested readers to determine what application, if any, the findings and recommendations have to their particular situation.

Relevant documents were analyzed from all 24 colleges but the survey involved 20 of the 24 colleges so there is a possibility of different results being obtained had all 24

colleges participated in the survey. The interview sample size was small when compared to the total population so some may argue that the data and resultant findings from the interviews have limited generalization to the Ontario college system.

This study did not evaluate the effectiveness of boards or the effectiveness of any evaluation process and instruments that boards are using. However, the perceptions of board members regarding their board's current self evaluation process were noted and relevant recommendations were offered.

While the study did take into account the views of board members regarding factors contributing to boards conducting self-evaluation and offers recommendations to improve evaluation practices, it did not offer or recommend specific evaluation models or instruments.

While not expected, given the assurances to participants related to confidentiality and anonymity and not detected during the analysis of the results, there was a possibility of validity issues of some responses if a participant felt embarrassed about their board's evaluation practices or lack thereof.

Last, there was the possibility that I had some bias because of my closeness to the subject matter and my knowledge of the Ontario college system. This possible bias was controlled by the use of the mixed methodology design, triangulation methods and an acute awareness of my role as an objective observer and data collector.

Recommendations for Future Research

The findings of this study lead to other questions to be pursued regarding board self evaluation practices. First, the size of the interview sample was small and although

balanced somewhat by the survey data I believe further research using qualitative methods and a larger sample size to explore more fully why boards don't self evaluate would be beneficial. For example, a case study where all members of two or three non-self evaluating boards were interviewed could build on the data of this study and would be quite helpful in developing strategies to assist boards improve their governance practices.

Second, in this study there appeared to be differences between board members of self evaluating boards and those of non-self evaluating boards regarding their responsibilities for accountability and transparency and their role as a role model to the college. This finding could be the subject of a future study to determine the validity of the finding and to see if other differences between the two groups emerge. Depending on the outcome of such a study the findings could help inform governance experts and consultants on ways to assist boards to implement self evaluation.

Third, the findings of this study suggest the effectiveness of Ontario college boards self evaluation practices requires further study. It may be helpful to conduct an in-depth case study of two or three "best practice" college boards and use the findings to develop recommendations on effective self evaluation practices.

Fourth, further research from the perspective of board members and presidents, on the topic of connecting the board self evaluation process with that of the president's is recommended. This study's findings revealed concerns about some boards' over-reliance on the president and the literature supports connecting the two evaluation processes but there does not appear to have been a study that seeks the views of board members and presidents on this topic.

Last, more qualitative study on why there is resistance to the evaluation of individual board member performance may be valuable. While I offer possible reasons for this and recommend boards evaluate individual members I believe more study from the perspective of individual board members is required to more fully understand their concerns and how to address those concerns.

Personal Reflections

I have served on college boards as an ex officio for 10 years and a board member (college president) for 7 years. In addition, I have also served on public boards, not-for-profit boards and a private sector board. This experience has provided me a unique opportunity to reflect on different styles of governance as well as the attitudes and behaviours of governors and ultimately led me to this dissertation. My experience has given an “insider’s” perspective while my study has forced me to “step outside” and take an objective, scholarly view. The personal reflections that I offer are a result of my experiences, my review of relevant articles in the literature and the findings of this study.

Most of the findings were not personally surprising except for one. I had expected the president’s role in leading boards to self evaluate would have been much stronger than the findings indicated. I introduced formal self evaluation to my board six years ago and I know from personal experience that one other Ontario college board practices formal self evaluation because the president requested it. In my study the influence of the president regarding helping boards to self evaluate was not demonstrated. The role of the board chair clearly was. While I still believe the president has a responsibility to assist the board embrace self evaluation it is clear from the findings of this study that the board

chair has far more influence and perhaps is the key to successful board self evaluation practices. Respecting the views of board members in this study, I would suggest that in cases where the chair has not engaged the board regarding self evaluation the president must work closely with the board chair to ensure effective self evaluation practices. My rationale is supported by current events and recent history.

In today's world the public is generally skeptical of those in authority or those who have power or special status (Bandsuch, Pate & Thies, 2008). One only needs to look at recent headlines in the media that point to scandals or at the very least dubious actions of people for whom society expects better. Besides the numerous catastrophes in the business sector there are many examples in other sectors of our society. In politics New York governor Elliot Spitzer resigns in disgrace, Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper denies knowledge of unethical practices regarding recruitment practices of the Conservative Party and is also accused of plagiarism during the 2008 Federal election while former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney is embroiled in an alleged bribery scandal dating back to his time in office. Even the world of sports has soured the public's trust as illustrated by scandals such as the 2007 New England Patriots "video spy gate affair" in the National Football League and the alleged improper use of steroids by pitching legend Roger Clemens in Major League Baseball. In the higher education sector boards have also had their performance called into question. For example, Chait, Ryan and Taylor (2005) cite the case of a university board that mishandled the search for a new president resulting in a \$1.8 million lawsuit settlement with the president-elect. So whether one is a member of a college board or other boards, in these contemporary times earning and keeping the trust of your stakeholders is certainly more challenging. While not a

panacea, conducting board evaluations and, at a minimum, being open and transparent about the process if not the results would help build trust between boards and their constituents.

As part of fulfilling their leadership role boards must serve as role models for the organization they oversee. The example that boards' behaviours set for their organizations' employees can contribute to positive working environments. By evaluating their own performance and making public the evaluation processes they use, boards are being transparent and accountable. Boards that chose to communicate with both their external and internal stakeholders are demonstrating that they respect their stakeholders. The Ontario Hospital Association (2005) stresses the importance of role modeling by boards. The Association notes this responsibility starts with the board chair that must set an example to the rest of the board by accepting an evaluation of his or her own performance and acting upon any recommendations for improving his or her performance. Similarly I would argue that the board as a whole acts as a role model to the employees of the organization by conducting regular assessments of its own performance and conducting an annual evaluation of the CEO. For example, if a college board includes a "360" assessment tool in its own evaluation procedures then similar tools may be more readily accepted by faculty and staff. By doing so the board demonstrates leadership and sends a powerful message regarding the importance of regular evaluations for the organizations various operational units and individual employees. As role models boards also realize assessing your own performance and making adjustments based on the results is a significant way to stay effective and relevant

in today's very competitive world (Minichilli, Gabrielson & Huse, 2007) which is another important message for employees of the organization.

As part of the implementation of the Reaching Higher Plan, the Ontario government introduced multi-year accountability agreements (MYAA's). In these agreements colleges must state how they are going to improve quality and access and how they will report their progress in helping the government meet its goals. The salient point is that the government sets out its expectations however the ways in which those expectations are achieved is left to the colleges and their boards. The board chair and the president are both required to sign the MYAA and submit it to the Minister, Training, Colleges and Universities. The government withholds final funding installments to the college until the Minister approves the MYAA. Further, in the spirit of openness and transparency and to demonstrate to the public their accountability, postsecondary institutions must publish their strategic and business plans, annual reports including MYAA results and financial results, key performance indicators and financial aid default rates on their websites and update the information annually. Previous to the creation of MYAA's board chairs were not normally required to sign reports or agreements with the government as that responsibility rested with the president. While this new requirement is related to demonstrating accountability it does provide another excellent example why board and president evaluations should be aligned.

Based on their work with non-profit boards Chait, Ryan and Holland (2005) state most scholarly analysis of board performance generally focuses on three problem areas. The first, group dynamics, was clearly identified by participants in my study as an area of concern. The second problem area cited as a cause of poor board performance is lack of

engagement by board members. This disengagement is characterized by behaviours such as poor attendance at meetings, poor preparation for meetings and a general lack of knowledge about what is going on in the organization for which they are responsible to govern. The third problem area refers to situations where board members do not have a good understanding of their roles and responsibilities as board members. Board self evaluation was identified by some participants in my study as a means to help address these problems. From my own experience I believe that role clarification can be effectively addressed in four ways. First, boards should have a comprehensive recruitment/nomination process that includes a discussion with potential board members regarding the roles and responsibilities. Second, roles and responsibilities should be thoroughly covered in the board's orientation program. Third, boards should have on-going professional development that includes regular reviews of members' roles and responsibilities. Fourth, board self evaluation should include not only assessment of how well the board is performing those roles and responsibilities but also robust in-depth discussions of the results by the board.

Chait et al. (2005) offer what I find an intriguing thought by proposing lack of purpose as a new problem area which they believe may also have some causal relationship to the other problem areas discussed above. In this situation board members may understand what their roles and responsibilities are but don't see value in what they are doing. Board members are questioning what difference they make. Chait et al. offer a variety of reasons for board members developing a feeling that they are not adding value. I have personally observed examples of these reasons and participants in my study also confirmed them. For example, in an organization with a strong CEO who

consistently ensures the organization is well managed, strategic goals are met and operations are conducted within budget, the board may not feel needed. Board members may also feel a lack of purpose in situations where they join a board because they believe in the organization's mission and values and want to support the strategic goals of the organization. However, they may find that the majority of their time is spent in an oversight capacity and that they simply perform a check and balance function on management. While this function is necessary, it is hardly an exciting or inspirational reason for a person to join or remain on a board. Another factor is that much of the work of the board is episodic. For example, the hiring of a CEO or the creation of a new strategic plan may happen only once or twice during a 6 – 9 year tenure of a board member. I believe the president or C.E.O. must work closely with the board chair to engage the board in activities that fall into the contextual, analytical and strategic dimensions in order to ensure board members feel a sense of purpose.

Chait et al. (2005) provide a framework for diagnosing board performance issues by providing three common problems listed in the literature and offering a new one of their own. While this framework is helpful, based on my experience serving on boards it is rare that ineffective board performance can be attributed to one particular problem. The reality is that there is usually more than one problem and the problems are more than likely connected. For example the problem of board members not being engaged or not attending may be related to the problem of poor group dynamics or the problem of lack of purpose or both. When assessing their own performance boards need to be cognizant not only of the challenges of conducting a meaningful evaluation but also avoiding the trap of a simplistic diagnosis of the causes of inadequate performance. A well designed self

evaluation process based on continuous improvement principles will help boards avoid that trap and help boards effectively perform their roles and responsibilities. In today's world of increasing and often competing demands from stakeholders, tight fiscal resources, and increased accountability and transparency, effective board performance is critical.

Summary

This study examines the perceptions of Ontario college board members regarding board self evaluation practices. The findings demonstrate strong support for board self evaluation but also reveal that some boards are still not performing evaluations of their own performance and that more attention must be given to improving the effectiveness of current self evaluation practices. Twelve recommendations to improve board self evaluation practices, grounded in the responses of this study's participants and the findings in the literature, were offered. This study provided new knowledge about board member beliefs with respect to self evaluation but also raised questions for further research such as exploring possible differences between board members of self evaluating boards versus those from non-self evaluating boards. Personal reflections were presented based on my own experience serving on boards and my readings of the literature. In summary, a case for board self evaluation was made. My firm belief is that board self evaluation does result in a more effective board which then results in a more effective college.

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Appendix A: Email invitation to College Presidents

Dear _____,

I am contacting you to seek to your assistance in gathering data for my dissertation within a doctoral program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education / University of Toronto. The purpose of this study is to examine college board evaluation practices in Ontario, explore the reasons why some boards do self evaluations while others do not and make recommendations regarding board self evaluation practices. This study has received approval by my thesis committee and ethical approval through the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto

Part one of the study will involve a questionnaire sent to all Anglophone Ontario college board members. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. Survey participants are not required to identify themselves but will be asked to identify their college. No college will be identified in the research report. Part two of the study will involve interviews on a voluntary basis to further explore the initial findings from the survey. The interviews will be conducted based on a representative sample of the Ontario college boards and their self evaluation practices.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Participants are free to not respond to any questions or to withdraw at any time during the survey without reason or consequence. All responses will be treated anonymously and confidentially. **Individual participants or colleges will not be identified in the research report.** This study has received ethical approval through the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto.

I am requesting that you advise your Board Chair of this study and if he/she concurs, assist me by distributing the survey to your college board members through your college Office of the Board of Governors. I am also requesting that you ask your Board Secretary to send me any board policy that addresses board self evaluation along with any evaluation instruments that your board may employ. If your board does not have any self evaluation policy or tools I would appreciate you informing me that that is the case. All boards who participate in the survey will receive, if requested, a copy of the research study findings and recommendations.

Thank you for considering this request. Your support of this study would be very much appreciated. If you have any questions or concerns please do not hesitate to contact me.

Tony Hanlon
President, Lambton College

Appendix B: Invitation to participate in a research study

**The Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V6**

September, 2008

Dear College Board Member,

Re: Invitation to participate in a research study which examines the perceptions and practices of Ontario college boards regarding board self-evaluation.

A research study on the perceptions and practices of Ontario college boards regarding board self-evaluation is being conducted by Tony Hanlon, President, Lambton College who is a doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute of Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

The purpose of this study is to examine college board evaluation practices in Ontario, explore the reasons why some boards do self evaluations while others do not and make recommendations regarding board self evaluation practices. The purpose of this survey is to collect data on the views of Ontario college governors regarding board self evaluation practices as well as collecting data regarding each board's actual self evaluation practices.

For the first stage of this research Ontario college board members will be surveyed on their perceptions and practices regarding board self evaluation.

Your participation in the study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate in the study you may withdraw at any time. **The surveys will be anonymous and your name will not be required on the survey.** **Your college will not be identified in the research report.** Only the thesis supervisor and myself as the researcher will have access to the information. Participating or not participating in this study will not affect you or your college in any way.

It is expected that the survey will each require about 10 minutes to complete. You may, without reason or consequence, refuse to answer any question or complete the survey. There are no risks associated with participating in this study. There is no compensation for participation.

Completing and returning the survey located at

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=GruafPE0rP0iJ5FsDzh4UA_3d_3d

will represent consent to participate in the study.

After the surveys are collected and analyzed, some board members will be invited to volunteer to participate in an interview. The interviews will be conducted based on a representative sample of the Ontario college boards and their self evaluation practices. A separate invitation regarding interview participation will be sent to selected college boards. The interview will examine in more depth the answers to questions on the surveys. The interviews are entirely voluntary and will take approximately 1 hour.

No participant or college will be identifiable in any reporting of the findings, in the thesis or in relevant professional publications and conferences in the future. The information gathered from the surveys and interviews will be kept in strict confidence, securely stored and accessible only to my thesis supervisor Dr. Charles Pascal, and me. At the end of the study all of the information collected will be fully destroyed.

If you have any questions concerning participation in this study, please contact the researcher, Tony Hanlon at 519 541 2410 or tony.hanlon@lambton.on.ca or my thesis supervisor, Dr. Charles Pascal, Professor, University of Toronto, at 416-869-4022 or cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca at any time.

This study has been approved by the Research Ethics Boards of the University of Toronto. If you have any questions related to your rights as a participant in this study please contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416-946-3272 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

Your participation in this study would be very much appreciated. Thank you.

Tony Hanlon
Ph.D. Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto

Appendix C: Survey on Ontario College Board of Governors Self Evaluation Perceptions and Practices

The researcher is a doctoral candidate at the University of Toronto\OISE who is seeking to provide new knowledge and understanding regarding board self evaluation practices. The purpose of this survey is to collect data on the views of Ontario college governors regarding their board's self evaluation practices as well as collecting data regarding each board's actual self evaluation practices. Participation is strictly voluntary and you do not have to identify yourself in the survey. No college or individual will be identified in the final report. All boards who participate in this survey will receive, if requested, a copy of the research study findings and recommendations. Thank you for considering this request and your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

To assist you in completing this survey the following definitions regarding board self evaluation are provided. **Based on these definitions, please select the response that you believe most closely matches your board's self evaluation practices when answering the question on your board's self evaluation practices.**

Board self evaluation involves a commitment by a board to conduct at least annual reviews of its performance and to discuss the results of the evaluation. For the purposes of this study board self evaluation will be classified into two main types, formal and informal.

Formal self evaluation is defined as a board having a written evaluation policy and/or processes and instruments in place that the board uses on at least annual basis to conduct an evaluation of their performance. The board may conduct the evaluation or hire a consultant to do so. There is an analysis of the data by the board or a consultant hired by the board. The board holds structured discussions regarding the results and takes corrective action where appropriate. Records of the review, discussion and corrective actions are kept.

Informal self evaluation is defined as having no written policies in place or having a written policy but lacking written evaluation processes or instruments that are used consistently from one evaluation period to another. Discussions regarding any evaluation results are of a general nature with minimal analysis of any data collected. Reviews are conducted at least annually and records may or may not be kept.

Board self evaluation of collective performance refers to the evaluation of the performance of the board as a whole and does not involve assessment of individual board members.

Board self evaluation of individual performance refers to an evaluation of the performance of each individual board member. The results would be available only to the individual member and the chair of the board and where applicable the consultant hired by the board to conduct the evaluations.

Please complete the following.

1. I am an ___ external board member ___ internal board member.
2. I have served on the board for ____ years.
3. College _____

Please check the appropriate response

4. My board _____ does conduct formal self evaluation
 _____ does conduct informal board self evaluation
 _____ does not conduct board self evaluation
5. My board _____ conducts evaluation on the board's collective performance
 _____ conducts evaluation on both collective and individual performance
 _____ conducts neither collective nor individual performance evaluations
6. Please use the scale provided to reflect your level of agreement with the following statements by circling the appropriate response.

Boards should formally evaluate their performance at least annually.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

Board evaluation should be limited to the board's collective performance and not include evaluation of individual board members.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

Board evaluation should include both collective and individual performance.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

The board evaluation process should be posted on the college website.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

The board evaluation results on collective performance should be posted on the college website.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

My board's current evaluation process helps my board to perform effectively.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

My board's evaluation process needs improvement

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

My board's evaluation process is used to plan board professional development.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

I would not join the college board if they evaluated their collective performance.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

I would not join the college board if they evaluated individual board member performance.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

I would not join the college board if they published the evaluation results of their collective performance.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

Boards should decide on which evaluations processes and tools to use based on their board's circumstances rather than be mandated to use a process and set of tools common to all college boards.
 Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree Uncertain Non-applicable

Please check as many as appropriate.

7. Why should boards self evaluate?

- transparency and accountability
- role model to college regarding evaluation practices
- government or regulatory requirements
- quality assurance
- continuous improvement
- strengthen board\president relationship
- other (please comment) _____
- _____
- I don't believe boards should self evaluate

8. What do you believe would assist boards who don't currently self evaluate to implement board self evaluation?

- board professional development on evaluation processes and instruments
- hiring an external consultant
- assistance provided by College Compensation and Appointments Council
- assistance provided by colleges Ontario
- requested by Board Chair
- requested by President
- professional development on effective group dynamics
- other (please comment) _____
- _____

9. If you don't support board self evaluation what are your reasons?

10. Any other comments.

Thank you for participating.

Appendix D: Email invitation to participate in interview

**The Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V6**

Dear _____,

My name is Tony Hanlon and I am contacting you to seek to your assistance in gathering data for my dissertation within a doctoral program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education / University of Toronto. The purpose of this study is to examine college board evaluation practices in Ontario, explore the reasons why some boards do self evaluations while others do not and make recommendations regarding board self evaluation practices. This study has received ethical approval through the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto

Part one of the study involved a questionnaire sent to Ontario college board members. I am now conducting part two of the study which involves interviews to further explore the initial findings from the survey. The interviews will be conducted based on a representative sample of the Ontario college boards and their self evaluation practices. As a college board member your input is very valuable in terms of informing the research.

The interviews are entirely voluntary, will be conducted via telephone and will run for approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be recorded on audio-tape and will be transcribed by me. All responses will be treated as anonymous with no identifying reference to either the individual or college.

Participation is completely voluntary. Your college board will not be informed with respect to whether you decide to participate or not and there are no consequences for not participating. Participants are free to not respond to any questions or to withdraw at any time during the interview without reason or consequence.

If you are willing to be interviewed for this study, please contact me at tony.hanlon@lambton.on.ca . Once I have received responses from the required number of volunteers I will contact each one (by email) to send a consent form and explanation of the interview process and to establish a suitable date and time for the interview.

This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Charles Pascal, Professor, University of Toronto. If you have any questions or concerns about this research, you may contact me 519 541 2410 or my supervisor Dr. Pascal at 416-869-4022 or cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca at any time.

Your participation in this study would be very much appreciated.

Tony Hanlon
Ph.D. Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto

Appendix E: Letter of Information for Interview

**The Department of Theory and Policy Studies in Education
The Ontario Institute for Studies in Education of the University of Toronto
252 Bloor St. West
Toronto, Ontario
M5S 1V6**

Dear Board Member,

Re: Study on The Perceptions and Practices of Ontario College Boards Regarding Board Self- Evaluation

Thank you for expressing an interest in participating in an interview for the research study above. Please read this form carefully, and if you are still willing to participate, please sign the consent form attached to this letter.

As previously communicated, this study is being conducted by Tony Hanlon, a doctoral student in the Higher Education Program at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT). Part one of the study involved a questionnaire sent to Ontario college board members. I am now conducting part two of the study which involves interviews to further explore the initial findings from the survey. The interviews will be conducted based on a representative sample of the Ontario college boards and their self evaluation practices. As a college board member your input is very valuable in terms of informing the research.

The interviews are entirely voluntary, will be conducted via telephone and will run for approximately 1 hour. The interviews will be recorded on audio-tape and will be transcribed by me. All responses will be treated as anonymous with no identifying reference to either the individual or college. Interview subjects will be coded by assigning letters and a number representing their characteristics and that of their board. For example, the second interview subject from a medium size college who is an external board member may be coded MCE2. There will not be an opportunity for participants to review the transcripts; these will only be reviewed by the researcher. Your college board will not be informed with respect to whether you decide to participate or not and there are no consequences for not participating.

Participants are free to not respond to any questions or to withdraw from the interview at any time. The tapes, transcripts and interview notes will be destroyed one year after all requirements for the completion of the dissertation have been met.

This research is being conducted under the supervision of Dr. Charles Pascal, Professor, University of Toronto. If you have any questions concerning participation in this study, you may contact the researcher, Tony Hanlon 519 541 2410 or tony.hanlon@lambton.on.ca or Charles Pascal at 416-869-4022 or cpascal@atkinsonfoundation.ca at any time.

This study has received ethical approval through the Research Ethics Board of the University of Toronto. For information regarding your rights as a participant you may contact the Ethics Review Office at the University of Toronto at 416-946-3273 or ethics.review@utoronto.ca.

To assist you in participating in the interview the following definitions regarding board self evaluation are provided. I will also review these definitions at the beginning of the interview.

Board self evaluation involves a commitment by a board to conduct at least annual reviews of its performance and to discuss the results of the evaluation. For the purposes of this study board self evaluation will be classified into two main types, formal and informal.

Formal self evaluation is defined as a board having a written evaluation policy and/or processes and instruments in place that the board uses on at least annual basis to conduct an evaluation of their performance. The board may conduct the evaluation or hire a consultant to do so. There is an analysis of the data by the board or a consultant hired by the board. The board holds structured discussions regarding the results and takes corrective action where appropriate. Records of the review, discussion and corrective actions are kept.

Informal self evaluation is defined as having no written policies in place or having a written policy but lacking written evaluation processes or instruments that are used consistently from one evaluation period to another. Discussions regarding any evaluation results are of a general nature with minimal analysis of any data collected. Reviews are conducted at least annually and records may or may not be kept.

Board self evaluation of collective performance refers to the evaluation of the performance of the board as a whole and does not involve assessment of individual board members.

Board self evaluation of individual performance refers to an evaluation of the performance of each individual board member. The results would be available only to the individual member and the chair of the board and where applicable the consultant hired by the board to conduct the evaluations.

You may retain a copy of the statement of consent for your records. To participate in the interview a signed copy of the statements of consent, attached, must be submitted to the interviewer.

All participants who complete the interview will receive, if requested, a copy of the research study findings and recommendations. Thank you for considering this request and your participation in this study would be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Tony Hanlon
Ph.D. Candidate, Theory and Policy Studies in Education
OISE/University of Toronto

Appendix F: Informed Consent

The purposes of this research have been clearly explained. I agree to participate in this study on The Perceptions and Practices of Ontario College Boards Regarding Board Self-Evaluation.

My signature below indicates that I have voluntarily decided to participate in this study and that I have read and understand the information provided above and the conditions under which I would be participating. I understand that I may withdraw from participating at any time without consequence.

I would like to receive a copy of the Final Report: yes___ no ___

Name of participant

Signature of participant

Date

I have fully explained the purposes of this study to the above participant.

Tony Hanlon, Researcher

Date

Please keep a copy of this form for your records

Consent To Audiotape

Title of Study: The Perceptions and Practices of Ontario College Boards Regarding Board Self- Evaluation.

Researcher: Tony Hanlon (Doctoral Candidate)

Name of Participant: _____

I voluntarily agree to have the interview session audio-taped.

I understand that I will only be identified by a previously assigned code in any transcripts or in any further reporting of the data collected at this Interview Session. Only the researcher will have access to the codes and the corresponding names of the participants. The codes will be stored in a secure location and only the researcher will have access to the coded transcripts. At the end of the study all records will be destroyed.

All information collected will be held in the strictest confidence.

Participant's Signature Date

Tony Hanlon – Researcher Date

Please keep a copy of this form for your records

Appendix G: Interview Questions

1. Please tell me if you are an external or internal board member.
- 1 b) Please briefly describe your professional work experience and education.
2. What is your length of service on the board?
3. What experience do you have serving on other boards?
4. What college board committees do you or have you served on?

Addressing Research Question 2 & 7

5. What are your thoughts about the board evaluating its own performance?
6. What are your thoughts about the board evaluating the performance of each of its members?

Addressing Research Question 1 & 7

- 7 a) What policies, procedures and instruments does your board use to formally evaluate its own performance?
- 7 b) How well does your board follow those policies and procedures?

Addressing Research Question 1 & 5

8. Does your board formally evaluate its own performance?
If so, what factors contribute to the board decision to evaluate its performance?
If not, what factors contribute to the board decision not to evaluate its performance?

Addressing Research Question 3 & 7

9. What is your opinion regarding requiring all college boards to use a common set of board evaluation criteria or allowing each board to develop and implement their own criteria?

Addressing Research Question 6 a & 7

10. What do you believe would assist boards to implement board self-evaluation?

Addressing Research Question 4 & 7

11. How do you feel about your board reporting publicly on a) your board's evaluation process and b) your board evaluation results?

Addressing Research Question 1 d

12. How would you rate the effectiveness of your board's current evaluation practices?

Addressing Research Question 6 b & 7

13. What suggestions do you have to help boards improve their evaluation practices?

Addressing Main Research Question & 7

14. Any other comments you wish to make?

