ACCOUNTABILITY IN PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS*

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1. Introduction

There has always been some measure of interaction and cooperation between organizations from multiple sectors (i.e., public, private, and nonprofit). This interaction has nonetheless intensified in recent years. The use of various forms of partnerships that bring together organizations from different sectors (i.e., public, private, and non-profit) has become more widespread than ever before. Public-private partnerships have emerged as a new tool or method of addressing important societal concerns and delivering services through the collaborative efforts and thus the combined strengths of organizations and individuals from multiple sectors. Various forms of this new multi-sectoral institutional arrangement have been utilized in such diverse issue areas as the environment (e.g., Long and Arnold, 1995), economic development (e.g., Bennett and Krebs, 1991), urban renewal (e.g., McNeil, 1995), health care (e.g., Alexander, Comfort, and Weiner, 1998), human services (e.g., Mandell, 1994), and education (e.g., Cuban, 1983; Mann, 1984; National Alliance of Business, 1989; Solomon, 1991).

The emergence of public-private partnerships as a new form of governance in many issue areas can be attributed to a combination of several factors. Chief among them are globalization, the speedy spread of information and communication technologies around the world, the resurgence of neo-liberal politics and policies in Western democracies, the severe financial constraints and budget deficits facing many countries around the world during the 1980s and 1990s, the increased complexity and interdependence of issues and players, the rise of NGOs and civil society around the world, and the spread of ideas and practices related to the notion of corporate social responsibility or corporate citizenship.

Many researchers have noted that because of their differences from traditional bureaucracies (e.g., their emergent, temporary and voluntary characteristics) interorganizational networks in general, and public-private partnerships in particular, present significant challenges to traditional norms and forms of accountability (Alexander, Comfort and Weiner, 1998; Bardach and Lesser, 1996; deLeon, 1994; Ghere, 1996; O'Toole, 1997; Weber, 1999). While this issue has

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been acknowledged by some, the debate about accountability in the writings of many scholars still revolves around single, autonomous, hierarchical organizations, without giving due consideration to the major developments that have occurred in recent decades in the task environments of many public, private, and nonprofit organizations. Compared to what has been written about accountability in and of single, autonomous, hierarchic organizations, little has been written on accountability in the context of interorganizational networks and public-private partnerships. The topic has largely been neglected. This study constitutes one of the first attempts to remedy the paucity of research on the topic.

2. The Purpose and Scope of the Study

The purpose of the main study was thus, to identify, describe, and evaluate the critical issues and challenges associated with accountability in public-private partnerships. The study from which this article is drawn investigated four major issues pertaining to accountability in public-private partnerships, which were organized into four categories, namely, perspectives, practices, problems, and prospects. The first research issue category included the question of how people involved in partnerships view different facets of accountability (i.e., what, why, for what, and to whom). Second, the study investigated main characteristics of accountability policies, processes, and practices currently in use in partnerships. The third issue category, problems, was concerned with the following question: What are the major challenges and difficulties faced by the practitioners in terms of accountability in partnerships? Finally, the study investigated the prospects for developing more successful partnerships as well as effective accountability policies and practices in and around these multi-sectoral collaborative undertakings. Only the latest issue category will be reported in the following pages.

3. Research Design And Methodology

Besides the literature review, this study utilized two qualitative research tools, interviewing and document analysis, to investigate the four main issues described in the preceding pages. The data for the study were drawn from field research focusing particularly on partnerships formed between K-12 public schools and private and/or nonprofit organizations in the United States, which have been increasingly utilized since the early 1980s. The idea was that focusing on an area where public-private partnerships have been widely used as a new form of governance for a relatively long time period would provide the researcher with an opportunity to reach a better understanding of the accountability policies, processes, and practices used by the people involved in those settings.

The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) reported that the number of partnerships in public elementary and secondary schools in the United States grew from 42,200 in the 1983-1984 school year to 140,800 in the 1987-1988 school year (NCES, 1989). The 2000 Annual Report from the National Association of Partners in Education (NAPE) puts the current number of educational partnerships nationwide at over 400,000 (NAPE, 2000). A survey conducted by NAPE in 2000 indicates that 69 percent of the school districts have active partnership programs, while the total number of students attending schools districts that have partnerships is estimated to be 35 millions (NAPE, 2001). In sum, public-private partnerships have become an important ingredient for policies and practices aiming to improve secondary and elementary public education in the US.

3.1. The Participants

In the process of selecting the participants for the study, intensity sampling or elite sampling was employed. That is, participants were approached by the researcher because they are experiential experts and/or authorities about a particular experience (Patton, 1990). A total of one hundred-and-seventeen individuals many of whom were partnerships directors/coordinators were contacted. Forty-five of those invited to participate in the field research agreed to do so. Due to scheduling constraints, a total of forty phone interviews were conducted. Two interviews had to be registered as missing data due to problems with the tape recorder used to record the interviews.

Out of thirty-eight participants, thirty-two were females and six were males. The participants came from seventeen different states, Texas leading with a total of nine participants in the sample. In terms of the sectoral divide of the participants in the sample, twenty-three participants work for K-12 public school systems while thirteen participants represent nonprofit organizations, and two participants work for private organizations. Out of thirteen nonprofit organizations represented in the sample, two were independent nonprofit organizations, five were state affiliates of NAPE, and six were either affiliated with a chamber of commerce or were created jointly by a chamber of commerce and a public school system to manage School-to-Work Grants. Out of thirty-eight participants, two hold associate degrees, two were working toward their undergraduate degrees; eight have undergraduate degrees; four were working toward their masters degrees; fourteen have masters degrees; four were working toward their doctoral degrees; and another four already completed their doctoral degrees (see Table 1).

Table 1. Participants by Level of Education

Education Level	Number	Percentage
Associate Degree	2	5.3
Undergraduate Degree in Progress	2	5.3
Undergraduate Degree (UD)	8	21.1
Additional Credits Beyond UD	4	10.5
Masters Degree (MD)	14	36.8
Additional Credits Beyond MD	4	10.5
Doctorate Degree	4	10.5
Total	**38**	**100.0**

As can be seen in Table 2, about forty percent of the participants majored in Education, with the remainder scattered among a number of other fields of study.

Table 2. Participants by Major of Study

Majors	Number	Percentage
Education	15	39.5
Arts & Humanities	4	10.5
Business	4	10.5
English	4	10.5
Management	4	10.5
Counseling & Psychology	3	7.9
American Studies & International Relations	2	5.3
Journalism & Communication	2	5.3
Total	**38**	**100**

Notes: (1) The most recent earned degrees are considered in the preparation of the table. (2) Management degree includes nonprofit and public management.

While forty-five percent of the participants had twenty-five or more years of professional working experience, fifty-two percent of the participants had less than ten years of experience dealing with partnerships (see Table 3).

Table 3. Participants by Professional Experience

Experience (In Years)	Experience Dealing With Partnerships		Total Professional Experience	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
0-3	6	15.8	2	5.3
4-6	8	21.1	1	2.6
7-9	6	15.8	0	0.0
10-12	7	18.4	5	13.2
13-15	5	13.2	3	7.9
16-18	3	7.9	3	7.9
19-21	0	0.0	4	10.5
22-24	3	7.9	3	7.9
25-27	0	0.0	5	13.2
28-30	0	0.0	6	15.8
31- +	0	0.0	6	15.8
Total	**38**	**100.0**	**38**	**100.0**

3.2. The Format and Content of Interview Guide

The approach taken in this study can be best described as falling somewhere between the interview guide and standardized interview approaches described by Patton (1990), and as a balanced mix of the fixed-question—open-ended response and qualitative interview approaches described by Weiss (1994). Put differently, semi-structured, in-depth qualitative interviews were conducted to gather field data for this study. An interview guide, with a complete list of fully worded questions to be explored with each and every participant, was developed specially for this research. Telephone interviews were used to gather data in the study, given both the purposes of the study and the resources and constraints of the researcher. Although the length of interviews ranged from 24 minutes to 78 minutes, the interviews lasted an average of about 41 minutes.

Since this study represents one of the first attempts to explore the critical issues and challenges associated with accountability in public-private partnerships, it was deemed necessary to gain insight into a relatively broad range of issues and concerns. A portion of the interview questions were adapted from Hayes (1996), and the researcher developed the remaining questions based on the four major issue categories described earlier.

Heeding the advice from Janesick (1998) and others, a total of four pilot interviews with partnership directors were conducted, one face-to-face in January 2000, and three phone interviews in February 2000. The selection, wording, and ordering of interview questions used in the study proper were thus finalized after going through a number of revisions following the pilot interviews. The interviews for the study proper were conducted in March-May of 2000.

3.3. Sorting, Coding, and Analysis of Interview Data

Although many useful sources are available for researchers as to how to evaluate and analyze interview data, this study in large part followed the framework and steps offered by Weiss (1994). Weiss (1994) describes four distinct analytic processes involved in producing an issue-focused analysis of interview material. These are sorting, coding, local integration, and inclusive integration. The analysis of the interviews proceeded in the following steps. First, all audio-taped interviews were transcribed by the researcher into word processing documents. Thus, separate files were created for each and every participant. Second, to conduct an issue-focused analysis, additional files were developed bringing the participants' responses relevant to each of the four major issue categories together. Thus, four large word processing documents, namely, perspectives, practices, problems, and prospects, were created, each containing all responses from the participants to the questions falling into that specific category. This process helped provide local integration of the interview material. Since the interview questions were specifically designed to gather information on certain issues, the sorting of the interview data was relatively easy, compared to the coding of the interview data.

Third, the coding categories for answers to the questions falling into the four categories mentioned above were developed.. Once coding was completed, response categories for each issue of concern were recorded onto spreadsheets. Then, summary tables were produced based on the number of responses falling into each category. Finally, a concerted and continuous effort was made to obtain an inclusive integration of the interview material throughout the analysis, presentation, and discussion of the findings from the field research.

4. Findings Related to Prospects

The participants were asked two questions during the interviews to elicit their recommendations for creating and maintaining successful partnerships as well as developing and maintaining effective accountability policies and practices. The first question read as "What recommendations would you have for others involved in public-private partnerships regarding creating and maintaining successful partnerships?" The second question read as "What recommendations would you have for other individuals and organizations involved in public-private partnerships in terms of developing and maintaining effective accountability policies and practices?". Since, in many cases, the participants' responses were interchangeably addressing both generic issues about partnerships and specific issues on accountability, their recommendations were combined into a recommendations file and were eventually evaluated together. The number of recommendations each participant would have for others involved in public-private partnerships ranged from just one to as many as ten recommendations, the average being about four recommendations per participant. It was possible to identify thirteen separate categories (see Table 4).

The largest number of recommendations (25) fell into the category named map and mutually-adjust expectations, followed by categories focusing on building relationships (18) and developing measures and measurement systems (17). As many as 15 participants recommended identifying and involving all relevant stakeholders, while 14 participants recommended recognizing/rewarding as being important for the success of partnerships. The remaining recommendation categories and the number of participants offering them are as follows: get buy-in from the top (10), identify and clarify roles (9), identify and mobilize resources (7), develop networks among partners (6), train people (6), provide support and incentives to school partnership coordinators/liaisons (5), start small (5), and remain flexible (4). Each of these recommendation categories is described and explained in the following pages, along with specific examples from the interview data. It will suffice here to mention that there were also nine idiosyncratic recommendations, ranging from "always listening to what the funders need and request," to "moving with corporate ideas", to "being persistent and believing wholeheartedly."

Table 4. Recommendations

Map and Mutually-Adjust Expectations	25
Build Relationships	18
Develop Measures and a Measurement System	17
Identify and Involve All Relevant Stakeholders	15
Recognize/Reward	14
Get Buy-in From the Top	10
Identify and Clarify Roles	9
Identify and Mobilize Resources	7
Develop Networks Among Partners	6
Train People	6
Provide Support and Incentives to School Coordinators	5
Start Small	5
Remain Flexible	4
Idiosyncratic Recommendations	9
Total	153
Number of Participants	38

4.1. Map and Mutually-Adjust Expectations

About two-thirds of the participants offered recommendations that center around, one way or another, the importance of identifying and clarifying expectations for the partnerships right at the beginning of partnership development. That is, the participants were recommending to others in similar positions, first and foremost, to have well-defined, clear goals and objectives for their partnerships. In this context, two major themes need some elaboration.

The first has to do with the attention given and value attached by some participants to strategic planning processes in assessing the needs and in identifying and clarifying specific goals and objectives for their partnerships. Expressions like, "(y)ou have to have a good strategic plan. You have to look down the road and to see where you want to be" (Interview # 02), or "the thing that has made our partnership very successful and has been the downfall of others is that we do strategic planning" (Interview # 08), all point to the importance and value some participants attached to going through some sort of needs-assessment and planning processes in mapping expectations for educational partnerships. The following excerpt from the interview with one of the participants illustrates well the issue at hand:

> *I think the main thing is to make sure there is planning that takes place. The partnerships that I have been involved with and have not worked are the ones who get an idea and decide to go out and get people*

> *involved right away and don't have a plan of action and have not decided the visions, goals, and objectives, their accountability tools. They need to take the time to plan before they get really excited about implementing them. That is the major thing (Interview # 19).*

The second major issue relates to an added emphasis apparent in many participants' responses concerning the importance of the mutuality of expectations in the partnerships, an emphasis that was less noticeable in their responses to the questions regarding the functions, purposes, and importance accountability. At a minimum, accountability requires that different parties involved or wanting to get involved in a partnership need to share with one another information on their expectations so that all are aware of what those expectations are. The importance of exchanging information about expectations is highlighted in responses like, "the number one thing that I tell them is to make sure {that} you set a goal for the partnership so that both parties know what to expect" (Interview # 32), or "I guess the recommendation would be that you all know what you want out of the partnership. If both sides don't know, then nothing is going to happen" (Interview # 34). Responses from some other participants made it clear, however, that more than just information exchange is needed to make those expectations shared ones; they should be mutually adjusted in such a manner that they address the needs or interests of all parties involved. One of the participants put it this way:

> *I think dealing with people's self-interests is fundamental. … I mean at the very beginning of the partnership, if our partnership is not based on "what you want and what I want", then it would fail. … (U)sing that self-interest as a foundation, then, really have clear goals and measurable expectations up-front. … (Y)ou have to have collaboration on the expectations. Because if you don't buy into the expectations, you are not going to help to get them (Interview # 07).*

4.2. Build Relationships

The recommendations falling into this second largest category concern the relational aspects of partnership development. Around half of the participants in the sample, one way or another, touched upon such issues as opening up and effectively using the communication channels, entering into dialogue, and developing trust and a sense of reciprocity among all parties involved in a partnership. Their remarks point to the critical role that developing good personal relationships between individuals from different organizations (and sectors) plays in creating and maintaining successful public-private partnerships. One of the participants even went on to say that "(s)uccessful partnership of any kind and any size or description is going to be successful based on one thing, and I am a real believer in this… that is relationship, building relationships" (Interview # 05). Many participants expressed the belief that building successful relationships requires, at a minimum, the willingness to talk, to enter into dialogue, and to spend time together:

> *I think the key to successful partnerships at any level is that the people from the two different points of view spend time with each other. And the processes of forming a partnership and of sitting down in the dialogue, those dialogues are very critical to our total educational process. And the more educators are encouraged, and feel free, and even held accountable for entering into those dialogues, I think, the stronger our educational system would be (Interview # 01).*

In some of the responses coded in this category, there was an added emphasis on the utility of such dialogues between educators and business people involved in partnerships, alluding to the differences of the "environments" or "cultures" they come from. Remarks such as "(i)t is really important for both sides to understand the culture of the other side…to sit down and have a good amount of dialogue about what their different cultures are like" (Interview # 24) were not infrequent. The utility of developing good, positive relationships ranged from easing tensions or conflicts that may arise due to individual or sectoral differences, to creating an environment that is most conducive to resolving issues before they become problems. After mentioning the value of maintaining with business partners as much of a personal relationship as possible, one of the participants was asked why "that personal part" is important. The participant responded to this question by saying:

> *I think that people react and people are willing to cooperate with things if they have a personal vested interest in it. It is easier for them, when they have problems, to feel like it is OK to pick up the phone and call me. They don't wait until things have really just gone totally awry. … (I)t is the comfort zone I guess (Interview # 20).*

While these participants strongly recommended building relationships in partnerships, some of them also identified the challenges that such a task may involve. For example, upon being probed as to how trust is developed, one of the participants said: "{by} working together, by the nitty-gritty, by meeting after meeting after meeting, by conversation after conversation" (Interview # 16). It is wise to leave the topic of building relationships in partnerships with an insight from the participant that was quoted earlier: "I guess that relationship building I am talking about… that is the soft side of what we are doing, but it is very important. And I don't think that you can fairly document that" (Interview # 05).

4.3. Develop Measures and a Measurement System

The third largest group of recommendations coming from the participants related to the issue of developing and effectively using the tools and mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the progress and performance of partnerships. Typically, they involved setting up a system of getting and assessing information on partnerships, maintaining a good database of all partnerships, ongoing evaluation of individual partnership projects, and the like. Two specific notes on the issue are in order. The first is that a handful of responses coded into this category also pointed to the importance of aligning the goals and objectives, as well as the tools and measures used to assess the results of individual partnerships, with those employed by their school systems. The second note relates to the insight offered by one of the participants regarding this issue that may prove highly useful to those involved in educational partnerships:

> *(S)etting measurements that are not just long-term measurements, but also intermediate measures whether they are process measures or outcome measures. But some way of measuring whether you are actually making progress. … {Also} making sure that you are measuring what you really want. And recognizing that the ultimate outcome might take five years, or ten years {to come by}. But how do you know that you are actually going in the direction to get there in the institutionalized way, not just the programmatic way?… (I)t is not just a matter of the numbers going down, or the numbers going up, but it is a matter of judging how and where the money is being allocated, who is involved in making decisions, those kinds of interim measures. … I am recommending patience, but I am also recommending a kind of strategic accountability, I guess. It is not just a "once and done" (Interview # 07).*

4.4. Identify and Involve All Relevant Stakeholders

A related theme emerging from the interviews with partnership practitioners complements their recommendations on mapping and mutually-adjusting expectations: identifying and involving all relevant stakeholders in various phases of partnership development, starting from the planning phase. The following excerpt from the interview with one of the participants provides a good example of such recommendations: "Engage people when you plan partnerships to build-in accountability measures and evaluation measures and expected results right from the beginning, before you ever set foot into actually doing something. In the up-front part of the planning" (Interview # 01). Some participants reasoned that it is important to identify and involve all relevant stakeholders in the evaluation of partnerships because of the differences that are likely to exist among various stakeholders vis-à-vis what constitutes success or effectiveness in partnerships. The response below is representative of this genre of reasoning:

> *I think that you need to involve all the stakeholders in a partnership. And so you need to identify who those stakeholders are and you need input from them. And that includes students. … Because, my view of a program may be totally different than the view of the person on the receiving end. And so without knowing that you would never have a true picture of what your strengths are and what your weaknesses are (Interview # 05).*

4.5. Recognize/Reward

The fifth most frequently offered recommendation by the participants, called here recognize/reward, has two related yet separate components. The first component points to the importance of recognizing individual and organizational members of a partnership for their contributions to and involvement in various aspects of that partnership. The following excerpt from the interview with one of the participants provides a good example of recommendations on recognizing:

You must recognize both the school coordinators, the people who make it happen at their sites, and the business and military community for being involved. You need to let them know both informally and formally that what they do makes a difference. If they don't feel recognized and appreciated, it won't continue to happen (Interview # 21).

The second component relates to the view that partnerships should involve rewarding experiences and/or outcomes for all parties involved, instead of being just one-sided, which typically refers to the situations where only the schools benefit from partnerships. For instance, one of the participants pointed to the importance of "(i)dentifying the resources that the schools can offer," reasoning that "(b)ecause it is a partnership, it is a hand-shake, it is not a palm open receiving things all the time. That is why we don't call it adopt-a-school anymore" (Interview # 23). Still another participant explained the why and how of creating a mutually-rewarding environment for all parties involved in a partnership:

> *You feel that all the time, we hear partners saying that, you know, recognizing that they are doing the right thing also keeps accounting. Partnerships are unfolded usually where they are one-shot deals. They either give big donations, or they didn't know why they are in it and what they are getting out of it. So there has to be some kind of enlightened self-interest, I think, on the private sector part. They have to be gaining some business value from this, whether it is public recognition, or employment, or building the future workforce. They have to feel vested in it (Interview # 27).*

4.6. Get Buy-in from the Top

Ten participants in the sample emphasized the importance of having the support of top managers from each participating organization. They recommended that partnership practitioners seek to obtain the support from the top to create and maintain successful partnerships. The following excerpt from the interview with one of the participants provides a good example of such a recommendation:

> *The first thing I say to educators is—and it would be the same to business people—if your superintendent and your board of education does not support a community outreach effort, bringing the public and private sector together, it would never fly. It would never fly. ... You have to have the superintendent and the members of your board of education saying: "this is a good thing and this is what you need to be doing!"... That to me is to establish a climate that says: "this is the priority and we want you here" (Interview # 31).*

Two participants specifically recommended that partnership coordinators/ directors report directly to the superintendent, for the sake of maintaining high-level support for and effective accountability in their partnership programs. One of the two spoke on the issue as follows:

> *One of the key things that I firmly believe in the area of partnerships is that you need to be directly accountable to the superintendent...to make it more effective, to make sure that the superintendent is well behind you. And also when the budget crunch comes around, there is going to be money for you. You are not going to get frowned out because you are too far down the boot chain. By being high enough in the boot chain, the chances are that the perceived benefits of what you are doing will be so strong (Interview # 17).*

4.7. Identify and Clarify Roles

Offered by nine participants, this recommendation generally refers to the importance of identifying and clarifying the roles for different members of a partnership from the very beginning so that there is a common understanding as to who is responsible for doing what in that particular partnership. Some participants, whose responses coded into this category, emphasized the value of designating at each partnering organization a contact person charged with primary responsibility of coordinating and managing all partnership-related tasks in their respective organizations. While one of the participants described such person as "a champion for the effort: it won't happen by accident " (Interview # 21), still another participant points to accountability connection of the issue: "(i)f there is a person whose job is to pay attention to it {i.e., partnership}, that is going to make them feel more accountable" (Interview # 27).

4.8. Identify and Mobilize Resources

This category consists of recommendations concerning the practitioners' awareness of and ability to access the resources needed for creating and maintaining effective partnerships. It will suffice here to provide just one example regarding such recommendations:

> *(S)chools need to do their part in terms of knowing that there are resources out there and being able to access those resources as successfully as possible. So it is almost like a diplomacy kind of thing, as well as knowing the people that are out there, potentially, who want to help and they are just waiting to be asked. And certainly, from my experience, the schools sometimes are trying to do everything by themselves, and that there are these resources out there that can help them (Interview # 09).*

4.9. Develop Networks among Partners

Six participants in the sample recommended that partnership practitioners develop networks among individuals and organizations involved in various types of collaborative arrangements with them in their community at any given time. Mainly, there were three different yet related justifications provided by those who offered this recommendation. One has to do with the perceived value of learning that is likely to occur through exchanging information and experience by different partners when they are brought together. The second relates to the possibility of using existing partners to recruit new ones. One of the participants explained this by saying "they are the strongest spokespeople, when I can have the president of a company call the president of another company and say: 'you ought to be doing this! This is what has happened for us' " (Interview # 31). Finally, some participants reasoned that developing networks among partners provides occasions to compare them with one another, which eventually may encourage some of them to increase the attention and resources they allocate to multi-sectoral collaborative efforts. The following excerpt well exemplifies such reasoning:

> *We try to document not only best practices, but kind of what all the partners are doing. … That puts them, partnerships, side by side. … Publicizing successful efforts makes others think "why don't we do that?" or "how to be recognized for this or that?" It brings up the best of what they are doing. You know, that just happens all the time. People say: "how do we get something like that going?" It is amazing how there is*

kind of a family competitiveness among people who manage these things (Interview # 27).

4.10. Train People

The recommendations falling into this category all point to the importance of training people in creating and maintaining effective public-private partnerships. There were, however, some variations among participants as to who needs to be trained. In some responses, two groups of people were identified as the ones who need to be trained: the volunteers and the partnership coordinators/liaisons working for schools. Evidence of the emphasis on training the latter group can be found in the following excerpt: "(t)raining of the school partnership coordinators is vital. They need to know how the program is run. They need to know how to go about setting up a partnership and how to go about maintaining that partnership" (Interview # 10). Some recommendations on training were generic in nature, such as the following one: "Lots of training and opportunities for people who are involved in partnerships to converse and have a dialogue. That is critical" (Interview # 21). Finally, the response from one of the participants put the issue of training into a much broader context:

> *You have certain schools that…are not strong in the community outreach piece. And that goes back to…if you want to go back to training, we don't train our people at our schools to deal with the community. I got an administrative credential and I have a teaching credential, but did anyone, did I ever have a course in, you know, how do you relate with the various publics that you serve? We actually offer training here for how to deal with the media, how to deal with the various constituencies that you serve. And {what} we have found is {that} the principals {who} come to those trainings are the ones that are already doing a pretty damn good job! They are just fine-tuning their skills, and the ones that we would really like to have come, don't show up! (Interview # 31).*

4.11. Provide Support and Incentives to School Coordinators

Recommendations coded into this category are related to two different aspects of providing support and incentives for people involved in partnerships at the school level. One is more generic in nature, highlighting the importance of partnership directors/coordinators working at the district and/or state level taking a supportive and encouraging approach toward school-level coordinators/liaisons to develop and maintain effective partnerships. One participant's view on the issue is that partnership directors should "be available to help them if issues come where they need help. That is very important. If they know that you are supporting them, they are going to be much more open to helping you" (Interview # 10). Some other participants, on the other hand, specifically recommended that school districts adopt the policy of providing some material/monetary incentives to school partnership coordinators/liaisons, a policy that has already been adopted by some school districts across the United States.

4.12. Start Small

A handful participants recommended that others involved in public-private partnerships should start small with their partnerships, by undertaking a limited number of activities or some small-scale projects first, being successful and then expanding on that success. The reasoning for this recommendation involves both the ease of learning and developing trust better (e.g., "they start their partnership out on a fairly small scale and they learn as they are working together... as they get to know each other, everything on that trust builds up on their history" [Interview # 19]), and making them more manageable and accountable. An example of the latter type of reasoning is provided below:

> *I guess my first recommendation is to start small. You know, just look at what kinds of resources you can find to do this, and start out smaller, which is better to have one successful, small partnership developed that has accountability, monitoring, and evaluation built in to it. ... I have seen this over the years consistently: those that start off with a big bang, with a lot of activities at first tend to be not so successful after all (Interview # 36).*

4.13. Remain Flexible

Four different participants emphasized the importance of maintaining a healthy dose of flexibility in partnerships, by pointing out the unexpected and/or frequent changes that may occur along the way. One of these participants explained the issue as follows:

> *I think you not only have to follow your goals, but you have to remain flexible in order to...you know... you may have to do some changes and tweaking along the way in order to meet your goals, but you have to remain open and flexible. You can't be rigid. Because, things change. It is not...it is a whole fluid business we are in. I think it is quite possible to be able to change in midstream, or to turn your partnership in a different direction and still meet your goals. I think it is getting really important (Interview # 02).*

5. Discussion of the Findings Related to Prospects

As shown above, participants in the sample were able to put forward a wide range of recommendations on how to create and maintain successful public-private partnerships as well as effective accountability policies and processes in them, which were eventually organized into fourteen categories. Many of the recommendations from the practitioners were very much in line with the extant research on interorganizational networks and partnerships. Three examples will be sufficient here. First, the second most-frequently mentioned recommendation offered by the participants pointed to the need for developing and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships among individuals representing member organizations of a partnership. The extant literature also emphasizes the importance of such factors as developing trust, creating effective communications, and practicing reciprocity to manage effectively in those settings (e.g., Coe, 1988; Gulati, 1995; Lindquist, 1993; Mandell, 1988; Ring and Van de Ven; 1994). Kanter's (1994) findings about business alliances can be construed as holding true for public-private partnerships as well: "(t)hey cannot be 'controlled' by formal systems but require a dense web of interpersonal connections and internal infrastructures that enhance learning" (p. 97).

As far as the recommendation to identify and mobilize resources is concerned, it should be noted that many partnerships between business and public schools are formed, in the first place, to attract monetary resources and materials from the former to the latter (e.g., Cromarty, 1997; Merenda, 1989). As Agranoff and McGuire (1999: 28) observed, "(t)he ability to tap the skills, knowledge, and resources of others is a critical component of networking capacity." More often than not, managing effectively in and through collaborative settings requires "the redefinition of resources" (Sarason and Lorentz, 1998). Finally, participants' recommendations concerning getting buy-in from the top was also echoed in the literature, in that the support of upper management for multi-organizational alliances and projects has been identified as a significant factor in determining their success (e.g., Kanter, 1994; Tushnet, 1993; Waddock, 1988).

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