

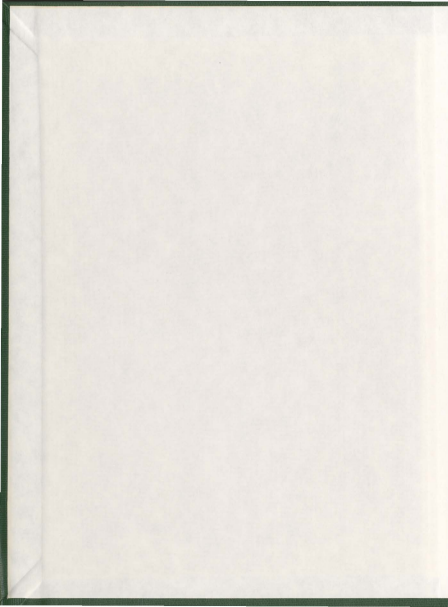
AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF  
EDUCATIONAL LEADERS CONCERNING  
SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS IN  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

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W. JOSEPH MAZEROLLE









AN ANALYSIS OF THE PERCEPTIONS OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS  
CONCERNING SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS IN  
NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

This is a qualitative research study dealing with the perceptions of educational leaders concerning the use of partnerships with the business community by schools in Newfoundland and Labrador. This study explores the role of the educational leader in securing, monitoring and evaluating school-business partnerships. It also delves into the perceptions of educational leaders regarding the efficacy of school-business partnerships in such areas as viability, the necessity of partnerships and the consequences of entering into such partnerships. The data for the study included the existing body of literature and several individuals who agreed to be interviewed for the purposes of this study. An examination of the data was conducted into the relationship between the body of literature that exists in relation to this subject and the responses of the educational leaders at various levels of governance who have had experience dealing with this issue.

The data revealed that educational leaders in this province with experience in this area are in favour of these relationships. They were aware of the issues and controversy surrounding the issues of school-business partnerships. They acknowledged the potential hazards, but preferred to demonstrate that they were a viable and necessary component of a school today. They stressed the need for sound and careful planning, and for all stakeholders in education to co-operate in facilitating the desired outcomes from public education.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

During the 1999-2000 school year, a small yet interesting debate occurred in The Bulletin, the publication forum for the teachers of Newfoundland and Labrador. This debate centered on the issue of accepting computers and video equipment from a private business in exchange for showing a video of current events, approximately twelve minutes long, to a majority of the student population during each instructional day. Included in this video is two minutes of commercials targeting young people.

Many educators and academics have spoken out passionately in opposition to such a proposition. The prevailing argument seems to hinge on whether or not the positive benefits of the technology resources that a school receives is significant enough to negate the concerns that are raised by educators including corporate advertising as a part of the school day. It is not an issue with simple solutions.

The above example is only one of a number of different types of school-business partnerships that have become more common in public schools. Declining school budgets have meant that administrators must become creative and flexible in trying to raise needed revenues for the necessities of running a school. Entering into partnerships with the private sector may become a viable or even necessary means of injecting money and/or resources into schools.

There are no decisions that educational leaders can make in a vacuum. Every decision affects others, and every administrative decision is shaped by external forces. Thom (1993) notes that "educational organizations are dynamic and therefore are constantly in a state of change" (p.

103). During the last two decades, North American public education has been in a period of reform. Earle (1999) points out that administrators must deal with the reality that their decisions are also being monitored by "think tanks, royal commissions, business forums and government reviews" (p. 4). Giles and Proudfoot (1994) postulate that these external influences require administrators to be innovative and responsive to a variety of interest groups, which makes the task of educational administration difficult (p. 252).

The situation becomes even more complicated when it is taken into account that administrators are also at the mercy of financial reality when trying to implement policy decisions. The problem of fiscal constraint is complicated by the fact that it is associated with the issue of school reform. Society has increasingly come to see education as a financial investment which it is reluctant to put any more money into without realizing what is viewed as a proper financial return (Thompson, Wood & Honeyman, 1994, p. 6). Accusations abound from sources such as the media, conservative think-tanks, neo-liberal governments, and corporate interests that public education is less in need of additional funding than it is in need of systemic reform. In this climate, it is obvious that schools must come up with alternatives to traditional sources of funding.

This is where the school-business partnership may find its strongest support. The schools and school districts of Newfoundland and Labrador are dealing with a declining student population and strict financial constraints. As a result, school-business partnerships could become a viable means for bridging budgetary deficits. They could provide the students of this province with badly needed technology equipment and work experience within the business

community which will provide them with a better opportunity to compete in today's global economy. Nevertheless, the issue remains a controversial one, with many in the educational field claiming that the commercialization of schools should not be allowed under any circumstances.

Cognizant of the foregoing, the author designed this study to analyze the school-business partnerships' experience in Newfoundland and Labrador. Included in this study is an identification of the types and nature of these partnerships, an analysis of the perceptions of school administrators concerning these partnerships and an analysis of the perceptions of other educational stakeholders in leadership or policy-making positions, including officials at the Department of Education, school district officials and representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The relationship between schools and business is not new. Society has historically associated education with economic development and social advancement. It is one of the primary motivators for the establishment of free and compulsory education. Because education is linked to work, it is logical to look at public schools as a place where the business community would like to have an influence. Having accepted the importance of public education to the corporate community, it is therefore practical to examine the nature of any corporate contributions or involvement in public schools. Currently, there is a paucity of resources concerning the issue of school-business partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The proposed study will provide greater awareness of the nature of school-business



partnerships in the province. The study will attempt to answer the following:

1. What types of school-business partnerships are currently in operation in Newfoundland and Labrador?
2. What is the role of educational leaders in securing a school-business partnership?
3. Is securing a school-business partnership viewed as a necessity? Is it viewed as a positive necessity? A negative necessity?
4. What are the rewards for a school that has secured a school-business partnership? Are there drawbacks? How do the positive and negative results compare?
5. What policies are in place to guide educational leaders in securing school-business partnerships? Are there policies (official or unofficial) which dictate the type of partnership that a school may enter into?

The answers to these questions, in conjunction with an analysis of this data in comparison to the literature should provide a valuable resource for the future study of this topic. In addition, it may serve as a useful resource for educational or business leaders contemplating entering into a school-business partnership.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

An extensive search for documents was performed using the Memorial University library holdings, the Educational Resources Learning Centre (ERIC), journals and newspapers, government documents, and on-line publications. The writings of many of the leading researchers in the field of education, social sciences and school-business partnerships have been reviewed.

This literature review identified several important issues worthy of discussion. As the topic chosen for this research relates to the relevance of school-business partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador, it must be noted that there is a scarcity of resources specific to this region. This is an important concern because some of the literature indicates that school-business partnerships are an issue that the educational stakeholders in this province must deal with; school-business partnerships are in a period of growth all over North America, thus signifying a need for this province's educational stakeholders and academics to monitor the situation.

The literature reveals that school-business partnerships are the focus of a struggle between opposing viewpoints from various interested factions. On one side is a group largely composed of academics, activists and educators, who believe that school-business partnerships are part of a growing trend towards educational reform that has an agenda rooted in capitalism and consumerism (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Molnar, 1996; Robertson, 1998). This group

perceives education as an institution which is under attack by business leaders. They question the motives of corporations who claim that the education system needs to be reformed and they dismiss much of the criticism of public education by business groups as an attempt to deflect criticism away from their own poor record on social issues, or as misguided attempts to improve the educational system (Giroux, 2000; Molnar, 1996). These academics and educators believe that the business community is ignorant regarding the dynamics of public education (Barlow and Robertson, 1994; Shaker, 1999, December). As a result, the business community is considered to be incapable of offering concrete solutions to any of the problems that may in fact exist. Many critics go further, noting that the business community is all too often motivated by greed, a greed incompatible with the education system (Molnar, 1996; Robertson, 1998; Shaker, 1999, October). They claim that schools are institutions which should be free of marketing and commercialization, and that schools should not become dependent on funds from private sources, as this could eventually lead to a curriculum influenced, or even dominated by, the business community.

The other camp is largely composed of the business community, the media, and a smaller group of educators, academics and the governments responsible for public education. This group believes that the publicly funded educational paradigm has become dysfunctional and that students are now leaving school ill-equipped to compete in today's global economy (Fiske, 1989; Gerstner, 1994). They believe that the allocation of more tax dollars is not necessarily the solution to the problem. They favour an approach that would see a massive and often radical overhaul to the current system (Hirsch, 1992). This would include a restructuring of the

curriculum, increased standardization and testing, and a greater accountability for teachers in terms of student performance and learning outcomes (Ontario Coalition for Educational Reform, 1999). Many are simply not prepared to use more tax dollars to address the perceived problems, and offer alternatives to this through private funding alternatives to public schools, such as school vouchers, charter schools, increased reliance on fundraising, and school-business partnerships or sponsorships (Chubb & Moe, 1988; Elmore, 1990; Nathan, 1996). This group sees education primarily as a vehicle for social and economic advancement, and claims that public schools are out of touch with reality. McCann (1995), asserts that the current round of educational reform in Newfoundland and Labrador is designed to fulfil the promises of this "New Right ideology" (p. 16). The protests of those who claim that the commercialization of schools is not what public schools are supposed to be predicated upon is largely rejected. This group counters with the suggestion that the commercialization is either harmless or inevitable, and therefore society (and thus public schools) should learn to work and thrive within this new environment (Mullins, 2000).

Both sides in this debate, of course, make relevant points. This researcher has attempted to understand the arguments on both sides of the issue. This is necessary for gaining an appreciation of the issues surrounding school-business partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador.

## **HISTORICAL OVERVIEW**

Historically, society has associated education with economic development and social advancement. It is the basis for the establishment of a free and compulsory education. Hirsch

(1992) postulates that “the portrayal of [public] education as a cutoff island [isolated from the influence of business] has always been a caricature” (p. 9). Gidney and Lawr (1989) provided an historical interpretation of the emergence of a coherent education policy in North America, especially in Upper and Lower Canada. They observed that the educational policies of this region were the result of a tremendous amount of work on the part of several individuals who worked tirelessly on behalf of the working and poor classes, who had no voice in the construction of educational policy. In lieu of interpretation, Gidney and Lawr offered excerpts from historical documents which allowed the reader to observe that early on, it was concluded by the powers of the day that it was in their best interests to accept part of the financial burden for a public education system. It would benefit the wealthy, mainly because it would provide their children with an education system that was cheaper than providing one for their children themselves (by utilizing the taxes of the entire region). It would also benefit the wealthy by providing the factory owners and financiers with a work force that was literate and capable. McCann (1994) notes that the public education system in Newfoundland came about during the nineteenth century as a result of “demands from all sections of the community, who saw education as vital element of social improvement...” (p. 17).

In 1892, a pediatrician, Joseph Mayor Rice, published a series of articles in which he discussed what he perceived to be the problems with public schooling (National Education Association, 1990, p. 13). Rice expressed concern that the American education system was ill-equipped to prepare students for rapid changes in “industrialization, urbanization, and immigration” (National Education Association, p. 13). This reflects not only an historical link

between education and business, but the historical criticism of public education by business.

Cogburn (1996) states that historically education systems were designed to meet the needs of industrialization, and that in the emerging information age, they should transform so as to meet the needs of the new economy. Molnar (1996) notes that as early as 1929, the National Educational Association published a report on propaganda in schools in the United States and made it clear that "corporate sponsored materials, in general, should only be used if they are indispensable to the education of children" (p. 39).

Certainly, there is evidence that the link between education and business can be traced to the genesis of public schooling in North America. This is only logical if one thinks about the relevance of public education to society as a whole. The concept of human capital, as explained by Thompson, Wood, and Honeyman (1994) posits that education "contributes to national economic health..., reduced crime,[and] less need for other public assistance programs" (pp.24, 35).

Although the concept of human capital does not receive universal acceptance, there is no denying that there is a clear link between education and work. Because such a link exists, educational stakeholders, the governments who finance public education, the business community and society in general perceive that they have a vested interest in the outcomes of public education. It is perhaps because society views public education as such an important entity that it has become the focus of a tremendous amount of criticism in North America, especially during the last two decades.

## CRITICISM OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The commencement of this current round of criticism has been largely attributed to the report on the state of education in The United States released in 1983, called A Nation at Risk (Molnar, 1996, pp.1 - 2). It was emphasised in this report that the economic problems of the United States were a direct result of a school system that did not meet the needs of American businesses (Molnar, 1996, p. 1).

This sentiment has been echoed by corporations, politicians and the media. Gerstner (1994) suggests that American corporations are being handicapped by the fact that they are "having to pick up the slack, spending \$30 billion each year as a result of poor literacy among workers" (p. A27). Gerstner also noted that "suburban parents think that their schools are first rate when they are not" (1994, p. A27). In an article in the New York Times, Fiske (1989) wrote that "corporate America has seen what the nation's schools are producing, and it is alarmed" (p. A1). Fiske (1989) actually went as far as to suggest that the situation has "the makings of a national disaster" (p. A1).

These criticisms of public education are not limited to the United States. A survey of business and labour leaders in Canada conducted by the Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre (1990) indicated that both business and labour leaders believe that "the most important factor in improving Canadian competitiveness is better education, training, and human resource policies" (p. 4). Human Resources and Development Canada (1997) notes that unemployment in this country is acute "among unskilled workers" (p. 2). Barlow and Robinson (1994) assert that "our schools are seen as chronic underachievers, squandering advantages and

opportunities without reaching their potential” (pp. 1-2). They noted that the Newfoundland and Labrador provincial election in 1989 was fought and won by Clyde Wells and the Liberal party, who had “singled out the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association as the public enemy [they] would vanquish at the polls” (Barlow and Robertson, 1994, p. 16). The Newfoundland and Labrador government’s Ministerial Panel on educational delivery in the classroom stated that one of the driving forces behind educational reform was “educational performance, more specifically the perception that the education system was not producing graduates with the knowledge and skills required to succeed in a rapidly changing society” (Ministerial Panel on Educational Delivery in the Classroom, 2000, p. 2).

Apparently then, a certain amount of dissatisfaction can be observed with the state of public education in North America. Corporate solutions to the perceived deficiencies in public education focus on making the system operate more like a business. Academics and educators counter that this is misguided, mainly because schools are not businesses. This is significant. It leads to the question of what exactly the role of public education is. While it has been shown that there is an historical link between business and public education, there is still a debate as to whether or not it is the predominant link. Gerstner’s assertion that corporations in the United States are being forced to spend money on literacy (1994), for example is problematic and says as much about the willingness of the media to over-simplify the issues surrounding public education as it does about the problems themselves. For example, Gerstner never specifically referred to the kind of literacy that was lacking. If Gerstner was referring to basic literacy skills, then obviously there is a problem (although it also would lead to further questions, such as how



people who lacked basic literacy skills managed to survive the hiring process in the first place). If however, Gerstner was referring to a specific type of employment literacy (such as computer skills), then not only should it have been stated in the article, but the question of what purpose public schools should serve is called into question.

The defenders of public education posit that it is not the mission of public schools to merely train future labourers for the work force. They also point out that the motives of the business community go beyond any desire to realize a better public school system. Indeed, they believe that corporations are motivated by the prospect of tapping into a lucrative consumer market. Evidently, it would be remiss to suggest that there is any consensus concerning the possible solutions.

### **CURRENT TRENDS IN EDUCATIONAL REFORM**

There are many different attempts at educational reform currently being undertaken in North America and elsewhere. Many of these endeavours are directly or indirectly inspired by the input of the business community. Molnar (1996) refers to charter schools, school vouchers, and school-business partnerships as the most frequent. This type of reform represents an experimental approach to restructuring schools which requires schools to meet the desired outcomes of reformers without requiring additional expenditures. Government policies in North America, including here in this province, also reflect this type of reform, in addition to pledging to make the curriculum more rigorous (Economic Planning Group Advisory Committee: Department of Education, 1992.).

In the broader context, there have been suggestions that the entire system needs to be re-

worked so as to better meet the needs of today's global economy. Cogburn (1996) postulates that our education system is out-dated because it was originally set up to meet the needs of industrialization, and is now in need of an overhaul to reflect the era of the global economy. Elmore (1990) hypothesises about a school system which could provide more choice for the clients who avail of it. Elmore notes that the system is highly bureaucratized and rigid, and needs to become more flexible and democratic.

### **FINANCIAL CONSTRAINT AND EDUCATION REFORM**

The problem of fiscal constraint is closely linked to school reform. Increasingly, the public education system has come under attack by stakeholders and the media who claim that public education is failing to deliver the basic and necessary skills that children need to function in today's global economy (Flemming, 1993, p. 57). Yet society has been reluctant to pay for any increases in the education budget. Anyone familiar with the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador can attest to the fact that there has been an extensive period of reform going on here in recent years. Like everywhere else, much of this reform has been centred on the curbing of spending on public education (even if it was under the guise of other motives) through a process of trying to make the system more streamlined. The result has left school districts with diminishing resources for offering a variety of top quality programs. As Barlow and Robertson (1994) point out, "unlike hospitals, which close down beds to achieve economies, schools cannot shut down desks" (p. 154). Robertson (1998) also observed that the Education Quality Improvement Act for the province of Ontario contained 260 references to the words "taxes" or "power" and 154 references to funds, but no references to learning or

curriculum (p. 50).

In this economic climate, it is obvious that schools must come up with alternatives to traditional sources of funding. Shaker (1999, October) suggests that "schools are being 'encouraged' to become more 'entrepreneurial' in order to make up the fiscal shortfall" (p. 3). This situation must be looked at carefully by educational leaders, because accepting financial contributions from outside sources will result in new voices having an impact on the classroom. This is one of the major concerns of academics and educators wary of school-business partnerships. Any new financial contributors will be insistent on having an input as to how their investment is spent.

## **CRITICISM OF BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT**

Despite the general acceptance of the historical role of business in education, it would be incorrect to assume that it is, or ever was, absolutely accepted. The critics of business involvement in education point out many negative aspects of capitalist policies on public education at the macro and micro levels. Frequently the effects of economic forces in the emerging global economy can be shown to have negative impacts on various social programs such as education both domestically and abroad (Castro & Altham, 1994; Spring, 1994). One of the major themes in the literature that is critical of business involvement in education focuses on the struggle by governments to maintain control over education in the current global economic climate.

In academic circles critical of the neo-liberal policies of governments in the western industrialized world of the last two decades, it is generally accepted that there is a widespread

erosion of the basic social safety net enjoyed prior to the 1980's. Chomsky (1999) asserts that "neoliberal doctrines, whatever one thinks of them, undermine education and health, increase inequality, and reduce labor's [sic] share in income; that much is not seriously in doubt" (p. 33). Spring (1994) concurs with Chomsky and offers the suggestion that "the easiest target of influence for a corporation is national systems of education" (p. 171). Spring believes that students in today's public education are being taught to "think in terms of corporate needs (p. 171). McCann (1994) argues that the reforms of the public school system in Newfoundland and Labrador during the last decade are "essentially an ideological import; the recommendations of which follow the line of American-Canadian policies of redesigning the educational system [as] an agency for promoting national prosperity in a world of competing economic power-blocs" (p. 233).

Castro and Alfthan, (1994), Borman, Castenell, Gallagher, Kilgore, and Martinson (1995), Dale (1997), and Pannu (1996) argue that the interests of corporations in today's global economic climate are frequently at odds with the interests of the state. They postulate that the state maintains legitimate control over education for reasons such as the preservation of democracy, not to mention the fact that the state is the principal financier of education. Gidney and Lawr (1989) assert that it is necessary for the state to control education in order to preserve national cohesion (p. 301). Pannu (1996) and Borman, et al. (1995) note that the business community displays a lack of vision when it comes to social programs. They also claim that corporations fail to invest in worker training and re-education either domestically or abroad.

Some authors claim that it would be hazardous for us to allow any further intrusion of

corporations into the classroom. Barlow and Robertson (1994), Molnar (1996) and Robertson (1998) all cite examples of corporate-sponsored material for classrooms containing questionable educational value at best. Some of this material is actually nothing more than slick advertising and public relations material. One would tend to believe that most educational leaders would not knowingly permit this type of material into their classrooms. However, Robertson (1998) and Giroux (2000) both assert that educational leaders may not have the resources necessary to monitor the curriculum content of materials donated by corporate interests. A deficit of resources in terms of time or personnel could result in educational leaders failing "to recognize the sleight-of-hand that appears to be a generous offer on the part of corporations" (Giroux, 2000, p. 95).

The cost of education is continually increasing, while education budgets do not keep pace. Educational leaders faced with this reality need to compromise on various levels at times, which could lead to an adjustment of their principles. In this context, educational leaders will be forced to decide how much compromise they may be prepared to accept. Taylor (1992) notes that schools may be too eager to accept contributions from businesses as an alternate source of funding. Desperate schools may be willing to compromise values in order to gain such contributions (pp. 21 - 22).

## **EXAMPLES OF BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT**

Molnar (1996) conducted a thorough review of the types of business involvement in education which is clearly biased against business involvement. In this review, Molnar displays actual lesson plan proposals from corporations which are nothing more than advertisements for

the corporations:

Prego Spaghetti sauce wants students to learn science by comparing the thickness of Prego to Ragu. Revlon wants adolescent girls to know that the roots of self-esteem are in their hair and asks them to discuss the difference between a 'good hair day' and a 'bad hair day' (p. 42).

Molnar alleges that corporations also get involved with schools in order to improve public relations, which (it is alleged) is especially true of oil and chemical companies (p. 28). Barlow and Robertson (1994) concur with Molnar's assertions.

A clearly stated definition of a school-business partnership is difficult to locate throughout the literature. Tymko (1996) defines them as "strategic arrangements in which one partner, generally the business enterprise or the corporate sponsor, uses various means of supporting the cause, programs or activities of the other partner for some type of tangible result" (p.10). This definition is vague with no revelations concerning the mechanics or the type of arrangement that may be the end result. It offers little insight to the educational leader with no experience in school-business partnerships. What Tymko does make clear is the fact that school-business partnerships are to be regarded as a form of fundraising (pp. 2 - 4). Robertson (1998) notes that this type of vague description would be the norm. Because school-business partnerships vary from school to school, the result is a rather limited and ambiguous "call for guidelines to govern them" (p. 290). Ruffin (1983) offers possible examples of business partnerships in schools which could include outstanding achievement awards for both students and teachers, loans of equipment, offering suggestions for future curriculum, part-time employment for students and work experience activities (job-shadowing) for students (p. 4).

Unfortunately, there is a paucity of resources available that outline the type and nature of school-business partnerships used in this province. While the research indicated that they do exist, no specific documentation could be located. The only example of a school business partnership of a controversial nature which has been written about was the one referred to earlier in the introduction of this study dealing with the Youth News Network (hereafter referred to as YNN).

Modelled after the highly controversial Channel One in the United States, YNN promised cash-strapped Canadian schools computer technology and video equipment loans on the condition that students be required to watch a short "news" show, supplemented by approximately two minutes of commercials aimed at adolescents. The ethics of this "deal" are questionable (as would be confirmed by authors such as Barlow and Robertson [1994], and Molnar [1996]). With all of the controversy generated by the proposal, it is not surprising that "schools that can afford to say no [to YNN], do" (Shaker, 1999, October, p. 2). Schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, however, are far from affluent. It is for this reason that YNN has become the focus of a debate over the commercialization of the classroom in this province. As Browne (2000) points out, "who could blame a school [in Newfoundland and Labrador] for signing on with YNN?" (p. 2).

Insufficient funding has made the proposal from YNN very appealing to some schools. In defence of accepting the YNN proposal, Mullins (2000) asserted that "what we must guard against is the presence of unacceptable advertising, not advertising itself, in our schools". Mullins did not provide an example of what acceptable advertising would consist of, and it is

doubtful that there is a school in Newfoundland and Labrador that does not contain commercial advertising of some kind. Yet the controversy surrounding YNN may lie less in the advertising than it does with the use of the instructional day for that advertising. In reference to the American version of YNN, Rank (1993) states that “the *main issue* [emphasis in original] is the presence of television advertising - of commercial persuasion - actively targeted at the audience of children within the classroom and sanctioned by the schools” (p. 52). It must be remembered that the proposal from YNN requires educators to use up a part of the instructional day for a ten minute broadcast which includes advertising (Shaker, 1999, December, p. 20). It is unclear if the educational leaders of Newfoundland and Labrador are able to make this decision without further consultation.

The obligation of administrators to ensure that instructional time is being used wisely is reiterated by Wood (2000), who posits that “we must be careful.... when... corporate involvement crosses the threshold of our classrooms and starts to dictate our curriculum and instructional methodology through a corporate contract, rather than sound pedagogical choices” (p. 3). If the value of the equipment received by schools is surpassed by the sacrifice of instructional time given up by schools and the negative effect that the advertising may have, then the efficacy of the partnership must be called into question. This is not an easy issue to decide, however. The benefits of the technology equipment are as difficult to quantify as the possible negative effects. It thus comes down to decisions being made by educational leaders which means it falls into the hands of individuals required to make value judgements that concern the future of our children.

When considering such a decision, Tymko (1996) points out that, should a school decide



to enter into a partnership which the community comes to view as being contrary to the best interests of the students, it will cause the community to doubt the ability of the school's leaders to make the correct decisions in the future (p. 13). The Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (1992) contends that it is very important that the relationship between businesses and schools be monitored so that "neither side becomes unduly dominant" (p. 50). Sharp and Sharp (1992) point out that businesses "prefer selective approaches to research and student sponsorship" (p.82). The possibility of schools dominating corporations is much less likely than the reverse.

## **DEFENCE OF BUSINESS INVOLVEMENT**

A review of the literature indicates that the defenders are not as prolific as the critics. Chubb and Moe (1988) explored the issue of private schools by comparing them to public schools and determined that private schools outperformed public ones. A glaring problem with their conclusions, however, was the fact that public schools cannot pick and choose their students. Unlike private schools, public schools draw their populations from the homogeneous pool that is available in a given region, whereas the private school's population would be largely heterogeneous (ie: affluent) and therefore artificially selected. This undoubtedly has an impact on the results of any comparison between the two.

As cited earlier, Elmore (1990) makes the case for school choice by suggesting that the public school system is bureaucratized and inefficient, and that privatization may be the solution for returning competitiveness to public schools. Nathan (1996) presents a glowing endorsement of the charter school movement through a very brief glance at examples of four charter schools.

Hirsch (1992) posits that the public education system is flawed because educators frequently fall back to a position where they feel that they are the vanguards of education, and as a result, they tend to look protectively inward. This results in a situation where educators fail to recognize the relevancy of educational outcomes "to the needs of the workforce" (p. 23). Hirsch suggests that the anti-corporate stance of many in the educational field is unfair and cites examples of the good-will of corporations towards public education, such as "R.J.R. Nabisco's commitment to give \$30 million over five years in grants to 'next century schools' that come up with radical proposals to improve American education" (p. 18).

It should be noted here that this proposal was initiated by the C.E.O. (Gerstner) of R.J.R. Nabisco, who was in fact cited earlier as a critic of public education. This type of proposal by Gerstner represents the fears that many educators have in terms of the attitudes of corporations towards public education. While the financial offer may be a genuine and sincere one, it is the attachment of the condition that improvements must be arrived at through some sort of radical approach which is problematic. Radical approaches to educational change represent an extension of corporate philosophy that educators are very likely to be uncomfortable with. Rather than gamble on failure, and the possible damage that could result to a group of students from a radical departure from educational norms, educators prefer selective, carefully planned, practical and incremental approaches to change.

The media also endorses the school-business partnership. In a New York Times editorial (1989, June 16), the residents of the state of New York were told that it was unreasonable to unequivocally refuse to allow schools in New York state to utilize the services of Channel One

(the American version of YNN) (p. A26). Doyle (2001, February 17) notes that the St. John's Board of Trade president, Michael Wilson, believes that "the knowledge of the private sector trends must be translated into curriculum development activities of our schools and university"(p. 30).

## **GOVERNMENT POLICY**

Governments are also subscribing to the point of view outlined by Doyle (2000, February 17). The government of Newfoundland and Labrador published a policy paper in 1992 which outlined an approach for reshaping the public education system so that it would better reflect the needs of the emerging global economy. It was emphasised that the responsibility for education and training was shared by "government, business, labour, and the community" (1992, p. 3). This paper went as far as to suggest that it was vital for "key stakeholders in the public and private sector [to] recognize their common interests and mutual interdependence" (1992, p. 44). It was also suggested that the government was prepared to "mobilize the business, labour, and education communities" with several initiatives aimed at reforming the educational system for the new global economic reality (1992, p. 44). These initiatives included programs such as an "adopt a school program" (which was not elaborated upon with specifics), expansion of the junior achievement program, a commitment to "expand co-operative education programs", the recruitment of "high profile community individuals to be 'partnership champions'", and the establishment of "community-based 'partnership action teams'" (1992, p. 44).

Despite the fact that this policy paper is eight years old, to date no elaborations on any of these specific proposals could be located. Because of the deficit of resources that were available

for this issue as it specifically relates to the situation in Newfoundland and Labrador, it is difficult to surmise the reasons for this. It could be due to the limited revenue which is allocated by the government for implementing such programs, and it could also be due to a lack of interest on the part of the business community in the province in becoming involved in these programs.

In a discussion paper released by the Mulroney government in 1991, it was made clear that businesses in Canada do support their opinions on education with actual financial contributions to education and worker training. In 1990, Canadian corporations spent "0.3 percent of our gross domestic product on training" (Government of Canada, 1991, p. 6). By comparison, the United States spent "over twice that" (1991, p. 6).

Another possible reason that the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador may not yet have adopted a formalized policy concerning school-business partnerships, is their uncertainty as to how they should proceed. The Government may be wary of too much involvement by corporations in public education. They may also view them as having a possible benefit to the students of this province. There is little doubt that financial contributions from corporations would be welcome in this province, but the government must also be aware of the tide of negative literature and the outcry of educators surrounding this subject.

## **CONCLUSION**

The literature reveals a public education system that is struggling with opposing viewpoints on the issue of school-business partnerships, educational reform, and educational finance. All of these issues are inextricably linked in a world which currently subscribes to visions of a neo-liberal global economic order. The literature makes it clear that there are two

major views emerging on the issues of corporate influence in the classroom and the emergence of direct school-business partnerships. Both sides have contributed their share of rhetoric and antagonisms to the debate, and it would be remiss to suggest that either side possesses a monopoly over the truth. It is also doubtful that either side is innocent of acting out of self-interest. Educators have as much to lose or gain in this debate as the corporate world does. What both sides in this debate need to keep in mind is the notion that the interests of students must always come first.

Because there is a lack of resources concerning this issue as it pertains to the context of educational practices in Newfoundland and Labrador, this study should provide valuable insight into the nature of school-business partnerships as they currently exist in the province. This in turn may provide educators here and abroad with valuable information regarding their efficacy.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides the reader with an overview of the methodology and methods that were employed in this study. It includes a description of the proposed sample that was studied, the research design, the methods employed, how the data was analysed, and how ethical concerns were treated.

#### **RESEARCH DESIGN**

According to Mertens (1998), qualitative research designs are useful for the examination of "a specific program, practice, or setting" (p. 159). This study of some administrators' experiences with school-business partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador is qualitative in nature. The data was largely gathered through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews were perceived as highly useful for this study because they facilitated "an in-depth understanding of a respondents' motives, pattern of reasoning, and emotional reactions not possible with questionnaires" (Mertens, 1998, p. 134).

The study used the multiple case method. A case study was the ideal approach for this because the researcher was able to "reveal the way a multiplicity of factors have interacted to produce the unique character of the entity that is the subject of the study" (Thomas, 1998, p. 82.). For the purposes of this research, the subject of the study is the educational leaders' perceptions of school-business partnerships.

Because this is a qualitative study utilizing the multiple case method, it was not necessary to employ quantitative sampling methods, as they would not satisfy the desired outcomes of the

research (Merriam, 1998, p. 61). The method of sampling utilized was purposeful sampling, which afforded the researcher the opportunity to “discover, understand, and gain insight” (Merriam, 1998, p. 61) into the problem being studied. As Stake (2000, in Denzin and Lincoln, [Eds.]) postulates, the cases should reflect a choice of cases that provide the researcher with the “*opportunity to learn* [emphasis in original]” (p. 446). The criteria upon which the selection of schools was based are as follows: The schools were all high schools participating in a school-business partnership. Schools were contacted in three school districts in this province: The Avalon East School Board (District 10), The Avalon West School Board (District 9) and the Baie Vert, Central, Connaigre School Board (District 5). Educational leaders at the district level who were responsible for policies that deal with school-business partnerships were also contacted. Educational leaders at the Department of Education and at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers’ Association who are concerned with policies on school business were also contacted for their input into the study.

## **METHOD**

In accordance with the ethical guidelines for research of Memorial University of Newfoundland, the directors of each school board were formally contacted (in writing) explaining the nature of this research study and requesting permission to contact and interview administrators from their districts. After permission was received, the educational leaders at the district and school levels were contacted in a formal (written) manner explaining the nature of the research study and requesting their permission to conduct interviews with them about their perceptions of school-business partnerships.

The same approach was used to contact officials at the Department of Education, and at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association. In the case of the Department of Education, a letter of permission was delivered to the deputy minister of education explaining the nature of the research study and requesting permission to interview personnel in the department familiar with the issue of school-business partnerships in the k-12 school system. After permission was received, individuals within the department were contacted in a formal manner explaining the nature of the research study and requesting their permission to conduct interviews about their perceptions of school-business partnerships.

For the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the President of the association was formally contacted to explain the nature of this research study and permission was requested to contact and interview personnel within the association who may be able to explain the association's official position on school-business partnerships in the province. After permission was received, individuals within the association were also contacted in a formal manner explaining the nature of the research study and requesting their permission to conduct interviews about their perceptions of school-business partnerships.

Once these protocols were completed and the interviews were arranged, a series of semi-structured, face-to-face interviews were conducted. All interviewees were asked a series of semi-structured questions, supplemented by open-ended questions in order to thoroughly explore the nature of the school-business partnership as perceived by the educational leader being interviewed.

A total of ten interviews were secured for this research. Six interviews were conducted



with school administrators, of which, four were administrators from high schools in St. John's, and two were administrators from schools with the Avalon West school district. The school administrators were asked the following questions:

1. Please describe your role in this institution.
2. Please describe your role in securing a school-business partnership.
3. How many partnerships is your school currently involved in?
4. Please describe, in your own words, how the partnership(s) works.
5. Why did you seek to secure a school-business partnership?
6. Who was consulted with before entering into the partnership?
7. Describe the feedback that was encountered during the consultation process.
8. Are you aware of any current policies that must be followed before entering into a partnership? If yes, could you identify them?
9. Do you view partnerships as a necessity? A positive necessity? A negative necessity?  
(Explain)
10. Please evaluate your current partnership(s) arrangement
11. Please explain the specific benefits to your institution from the partnership
12. Are there any draw backs to the partnership arrangement?
13. If you had the luxury of starting over, would you have done anything differently?
14. What advice would you offer to the administrator contemplating entering into a partnership?

In addition to the six administrators at the school level, two officials who work at the

district level were also interviewed. One official works with the Avalon West school district, and one works with the Avalon East school district. They were asked the following questions:

1. Please describe your role in this institution.
2. Please describe your role in monitoring school-business partnerships.
3. How many partnerships is your district aware of that schools in this district are currently involved in?
4. Please describe, in your own words, how the school board feels that these partnerships work.
5. Does the school board feel that schools in this province should seek to secure a school-business partnership? (explain)
6. Who should be consulted with before entering into the partnership?
7. Are you aware of any current policies that must be followed before entering into a partnership? If yes, could you identify them?
8. Do you view partnerships as a necessity? A positive necessity? A negative necessity? (Explain)
9. What advice would you offer to the administrator contemplating entering into a partnership?

A member of the Department of Education was also interviewed. This official was asked the following questions:

1. Please describe your role in this institution.
2. Please describe your role in monitoring school-business partnerships.

3. How many partnerships is your department aware of that schools in this province are currently involved in?
4. Please describe, in your own words, how the department feels that these partnerships work.
5. Does the department feel that schools in this province should seek to secure a school-business partnership? (explain)
6. Who should be consulted with before entering into the partnership?
7. Are you aware of any current policies that must be followed before entering into a partnership? If yes, could you identify them?
8. Do you view partnerships as a necessity? A positive necessity? A negative necessity? (Explain)
9. What advice would you offer to the administrator contemplating entering into a partnership?

Finally, an official with the Newfoundland and Labrador Teacher's Association was interviewed and asked the following:

1. Please describe your role in the association.
2. Please describe your role in monitoring school-business partnerships.
3. How many partnerships is the association aware of that schools in this province are currently involved in?
4. Please describe, in your own words, how the association feels that these partnerships work.

5. Does the association feel that schools in this province should seek to secure a school-business partnership? (explain)
6. Who should be consulted with before entering into the partnership?
7. Are you aware of any current policies that must be followed before entering into a partnership? If yes, could you identify them?
8. Do you view partnerships as a necessity? A positive necessity? A negative necessity? (Explain)
9. What advice would you offer to the administrator contemplating entering into a partnership?

It is the belief of the researcher that the interviews, combined with an analysis of documents and relevant literature, provide relevance to establishing the logic necessary to link the data with the literature review, facilitating the appropriate analyses (Mertens, 1998, p. 167).

The data analysis consisted of an examination of each case for comparisons and differences. Because the researcher employed the multiple case method, the differences and the similarities between cases provided the researcher with a holistic understanding of school-business partnerships in the province (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998, p. 63).

The data has also been compared to the literature in order to determine whether the data contains both similarities and differences to government policies and academic perceptions of the phenomenon. Tuckman (1999) notes that this type of analysis allows the researcher to obtain "a reasonably representative picture of the occurrence" (p. 403).

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF DATA**

Over a period of six weeks, interviews were conducted with ten individuals as described in the previous chapter. The researcher attempted to obtain a reasonable cross-section of educational leadership at various levels and locations throughout the province. Due to time constraints and factors beyond the control of the researcher, interviews could only be secured with individuals residing on the Avalon peninsula and the majority of interviewees were located in the metropolitan St. John's region. Educational leaders at various levels and locations were chosen in order to provide the researcher with a more holistic understanding of the perceptions and experiences of leaders in this province with school-business partnerships.

The interviews were tape recorded with the permission of each participant. Some of the interviews were conducted in person, while others were conducted via telephone. The questions were designed to be as specific as possible, but individual participants were free to interpret the questions in their own manner, and several chose to do so. Not all of the questions were answered by all of the participants.

At the completion of the interview process, each participant's interview was transcribed and assigned a number (not necessarily in the order in which they were interviewed) for the purposes of reporting their information here. A brief profile of each participant follows:

Interviewee #1 Male, Director, Department of education, Government of  
Newfoundland and Labrador

Interviewee #2 Male, Partnerships Co-ordinator, Avalon West School District

Interviewee #3 Male, District Official, Avalon East School Board

Interviewee #4 Male, Administrative Officer, Newfoundland and Labrador  
Teachers' Association

Interviewee #5 Male, High School Administrator, Avalon West School District

Interviewee #6 Female, High School Administrator, Avalon West School District

Interviewee #7 Female, High School Administrator, Avalon East School District

Interviewee #8 Male, High School Administrator, Avalon East School District

Interviewee #9 Male, High School Administrator, Avalon East School District

Interviewee #10 Male, High School Administrator, Avalon East School District

This study of school-business partnerships revealed important characteristics of the partnerships in this province in several categories, including the types of partnerships that are being used, the frequency of their use by individual schools and the frequency of their distribution throughout the province, the role of educational leaders concerning school-business partnerships, the policies (or lack thereof) which guide educational leaders in this area, the necessity of school-business partnerships, the benefits of school-business partnerships, and the concerns that educational leaders in this province have regarding these partnerships. A presentation of the data in this manner will be followed by an overall commentary on the efficacy of school-business partnerships in the data analysis.

## **FREQUENCY AND DISTRIBUTION OF PARTNERSHIPS**

First, in terms of the frequency and distribution of partnerships, it was evident that their use and distribution was quite uneven. There was a notable difference between the number of

school-business partnerships from school to school, and the difference was compounded when one compared rural schools to urban schools. This assertion was confirmed by the educational leaders themselves.

In certain areas, like the St. John's area, you have a lot of corporations within the city, or within St. John's and Mt. Pearl [schools] probably have far more [of these] arrangements than you would find in smaller communities (Interviewee #4).

A district official with the Avalon East school district pointed out that within their district,

We have a regional data base with approximately 1000 employers [in it] that everybody [with] our board accesses and [the data base] has detailed information on each of the private companies and organizations that are out there (Interviewee #3).

By comparison, the Avalon West School Board claimed to be involved in approximately forty partnerships, with every school in the district being involved in at least one (Interviewee #2). In terms of the actual schools themselves, there was a variance in the number of partnerships regardless of whether or not the school was rural or urban. However, the difference between rural and urban schools was more pronounced. In terms of numbers, the rural schools noted that their partnerships were few, which they felt was a reflection of their rural status:

Our biggest challenge I guess is that there are very few businesses [in our region] we can really connect with, especially large businesses that could afford to support the school (Interviewee #6).

Another rural educator noted:

In terms of the business community, there's only one business really in this whole geographic area of eighty kilometers that we're servicing that we can access. Once you go outside [of our region] it's hit and miss. We've tried numerous partners outside [of our region] but they're not interested. They've either got their partnerships in their locale, or they're just not interested. So it's a struggle (Interviewee #5).

By comparison, the urban schools have a significantly greater number of partners, ranging

from a minimum number of four (Interviewee #9) to a maximum of three hundred (Interviewee #8), with the remaining two schools surveyed ranging in the fifty to one hundred range (Interviewee #7, Interviewee #6).

The reasons for this striking contrast between rural and urban schools obviously include the reasons mentioned by rural educational leaders mentioned above. Another significant factor lies in the nature of the school-business partnerships being pursued by the schools themselves. The research revealed that the high school co-operative education program was by far the single largest component of school-business partnerships in this province. According to the Department of Education, there are currently approximately "fifty-two or fifty-three schools that [are] involved in co-operative education" (Interviewee #1). It was also noted that:

The federal government introduced co-operative education in the province and funded its initiation into the secondary system. A couple of years ago, the federal government withdrew that funding, and since that time, co-operative education in... many schools throughout the province has maintained its profile and in some instances has grown with resources provided to the school boards by the department of education, not provided specifically for co-op education, but provided to the boards and letting them decide where the priorities are, and in many instances the boards have decided that co-op education and links with the business community is an important area and one in which they should allocate some resources (Interviewee #1).

In the Avalon East School District, the co-operative education program has received a tremendous amount of support.

In this board in particular there's a greater variety of co-op programs available than you'll find in Eastern Canada, and our schools have maintained them because they really see a value in them... We put out more co-op students at the high school level than Memorial [University of Newfoundland], [the] College of the North Atlantic and all other private institutions combined (Interviewee #3).

The Avalon East School District is not surpassing rural schools in the province simply



because of rural-urban differences, rather, it is due in part to an ideological and financial commitment to school-business partnerships and experiences within the business community through co-operative education for their students that is stronger than in many other regions or institutions regardless of scope. Co-operative education was the type of school-business partnership that was most frequently mentioned by educators in the Avalon East School District. It was also the type of partnership which was most vocally praised by educators at the various levels of the education system in this province. This raises the issue of the types of partnerships in general that are present in Newfoundland and Labrador.

#### **TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS**

The types of partnerships being used in this province reflect most of the types of partnerships that are described in the literature. This includes both the positive and the negative types as defined by many of the authors in the literature review. The controversial Youth News Network is currently operating in only one school in this province. This type of partnership is the type that academics and educators criticize as being "exploitative"(Interviewee #4). The criticism stems from the perception that students are being provided with a service or resources simply because there is the possibility of marketing a product or service of some sort to students somewhere along the line; it is this perception that is deemed to be harmful to students.

It is doubtful that you could locate a school in this province that in fact does not have some sort of arrangement of this nature in the form of a score clock sponsored by a soft-drink company, or even the granting of exclusive distribution rights for soft drinks in the school in exchange for something in return. The school-business partnerships in this province do not

reflect this type of partnership for the most part. Nevertheless, the administrators in this study acknowledged that they were all actively engaged in the “sponsorship” form of business partnerships: “We’ve got a couple of other partnerships this year, some companies who have come forth, I’ll say sponsors, you know, like for hockey uniforms and things like that” (Interviewee #8).

Generally, the administrators felt that this was not a harmful process, especially when one considers what the schools had to do in return.

Maybe they’ll take on a sponsorship role, or provide uniforms for a basketball team or something. In return, we might have to put their name on our basketball jersey, or we might have to put a patch on the sleeve of a soccer uniform (Interviewee #10).

One administrator commented on these types of partnerships by observing that,

It can’t just be a donation, it truly has to be something that both parties receive [benefits from], if there isn’t, it varies to a degree, but generally they don’t last in the long term (Interviewee #7).

This was not always the case, and it was clear that the educational leaders in this study recognized that businesses were prepared to offer a tremendous amount of resources in return for some form of sponsorship. Some schools relied more on the sponsorship forms of school-business partnerships than did other schools. Some of the partnerships that were in the form of sponsorships were larger than the donation of school uniforms. Both of the rural administrators noted that they were involved with major corporations (this was in spite of the fact that they were only involved in relatively few school-business partnerships). One administrator described the benefits of this partnership.

They've assisted us in the past, for instance, by using one of their trucks to raise the dish on our roof... They, from time to time, do fund raisers and they've included us in that, and when they've got some technology equipment that's no longer any good to them, they'll send it our way (Interviewee #5).

In return for this type of support, the company receives relatively little in return:

We invite them to our various events, and we promote them from time to time. There was a time when we used them on our letterhead, but we don't use that anymore because we didn't find that it was very significant. Mostly by invitation and by giving them the opportunity to publicly present things to the school and being a part of it. It's mostly [public relations] (Interviewee #5).

This type of arrangement was similar to the experiences of the other rural administrator who noted the following arrangement:

We've got one of the better computer labs in the district that's maintained on a regular basis. They provide the modems, the line support, and if they go down, for whatever reason, they're here within twenty-four hours to support that. They provide all of the connections and they even went as far as to provide us with an air conditioner so that the computers will stay cool (Interviewee #6).

In return for this support, the business receives the following:

We promote them as being a partner in the school. There is not as much [advertising] as there was initially... I know that this sounds like a small thing but I really think that it's important: I don't think that anyone involved in our school, any of our staff or support staff, supports any other company [for their particular service]... I wouldn't go anywhere else right now, I'm really pleased with what they've done for us (Interviewee #6).

It is arguable that an entire community (or a significant proportion thereof) showing loyalty exclusively to a particular company is more than a "small thing". It is certainly a positive development for a company engaged in a school-business partnership. It would also be difficult to find any fault on the part of the company for this result. The students are not making the choices here, rather the students' parents and other adults in the community are making this

choice. This type of benefit to a company has no implications for students or a school in terms of any direct effects. It was also not a compulsory component of the arrangement but rather a situation that resulted from a positive relationship.

Repeatedly, the administrators who were interviewed chose to describe the relationship that they had with the business community as being philanthropic . Consider the following examples: “I’ve never felt any pressure in regards to promoting their product. In all cases I’ve really experienced a philanthropic point of view” (Interviewee #9).

I haven’t seen anything that’s been done that has in mind a corporate interest, to try to put something in our facility in return for support. It’s basically been [on behalf of the corporations] ‘what can we do to support you?’ They’re not making any excessive demands on us (Interviewee #8).

It also became apparent that the school-business relationship in this province is largely an initiative of individual schools, and is fostered on the premise of bestowing upon the students of this province a first-hand experience with the business sector. It is a deliberate attempt to bridge the gap between the schools and the work force, which is realized mainly through co-operative education and similar initiatives.

The following are examples of the main type of partnership discussed with the participants in this research:

We’ve got about a hundred students that are going to be placed in the work place starting on Monday of next week, and so that will be a hundred active businesses working with students in our school for the next eight weeks (Interviewee #8).

We have a very active co-op ed program that is semesterized, and after three to four weeks of pre-employment training, our students then for the rest of the semester, every afternoon... Will go and work in a specific area from one to five p.m. and these areas

could be any kind of a career exploration type of business (Interviewee #10).

In addition to co-operative education there are other initiatives that are designed to facilitate links between schools and the work place. Several educational leaders offered the following examples:

Another type of partnership is where we have... a lot of business and professional people coming in and speaking to our classes. We have a lot of field trips and they are willing to take some of our students [on] job-shadowing sorts of experiences, and it's not as extensive an involvement as the co-op education partner, but it's still quite a significant and valuable contribution (Interviewee #10).

In reference to the type of partnership where students receive exposure to the workplace or to individuals in various professional roles, one administrator pointed out that,

Kids that come from a disadvantaged home have very little opportunity to see this stuff... Some of these kids would never have the opportunity to meet an engineer, but in a partnership they could, and see if that's a job that would like to do someday. They may begin to see a world of possibilities for them (Interviewee #7).

Another administrator referred to the extensive involvement in their school of a professional sports team which resulted in "Developing a motivational plan for students. [The students] would receive awards from players for outstanding achievement, or attendance, improvement in academics, or that kind of thing" (Interviewee #9).

These are the kinds of initiatives that were being supported at all levels of educational leadership in this province. For example, a district official had the following observation to make regarding the nature of school-business partnerships with the Avalon East School District:

It's not just about getting a set of team uniforms, that's not a partnership, it's more of a sponsorship. And I think those are good and we need those as well. But when you're

talking [about] partnerships, your talking [about] back and forth co-operation (Interviewee #3).

A district official with the Avalon West School Board characterized the nature of the partnerships within their board in the following manner:

From an academic perspective, we feel that they are giving us a forum for professional development for teachers, and they are also providing us with support for the learning community, parents and other adults in the community.... Partnerships provide very useful resources, both human and financial. It supplies resources beyond what we would be able to give our teachers (Interviewee #2).

The above data reveals a wide variety of school-business partnerships. This is not surprising, considering the lack of a working definition throughout the literature. Using the broadest possible scope, a school-business partnership is defined by this author as a situation in which a member or members of the business community and a school come together to work towards a common goal. Keeping this in mind, it is appropriate to observe the process by which the two groups come together to achieve this.

## **ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS**

In discussions with each of the participants, they were asked to describe their role as it pertained to school-business partnerships. All of the participants claimed a leadership role in this area, albeit to varying degrees. At the school level, the administrators in this study generally played a predominant role in terms of monitoring the partnerships, initiating the partnership process, fostering the relationship and determining future directions. The other administrators described their role as primarily one which entailed monitoring what the schools were doing.

although they did have a policy role to play in varying degrees. Of the four participants who were not at the school level, only one actually had a job description that assigned school-business partnerships as the specific role of the position (Interviewee #2), and the role was divided between school-business partnerships and professional growth and development for teachers. The other three participants had positions in which the responsibility for monitoring school business partnerships was more incidental to their official positions. The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association and the Avalon East School District each have individuals monitoring this situation who have accumulated significant experience in this area (both of these individuals were interviewed). The Department of Education also has several individuals with experience dealing with this issue, and who have been consulted for policy purposes. The department is also well aware of individuals in this province beyond the departmental level who have considerable experience in this area, and they are regularly consulted with. Currently, the Department of Education has no position in which an individual is dedicated to monitoring school-business partnerships.

The Department of Education philosophically supports the idea of school-business partnerships: "There's a strong belief that the private sector has a strong role to play in the education of students" (Interviewee #1).

At the same time, however, the department advises caution on the part of school districts and individual schools before entering into any agreements:

I think that it would be advisable for an administrator at the school level who's exploring linkages with the business community to check and see if there is a policy at the board level, because there are some dangers too, and at a time when the funding for education is

tight, schools are looking for financial partners, and there's a danger of providing to the business community, I guess, captive partners (Interviewee #1).

The departmental views on school-business partnerships reflected an insightful and knowledgeable treatment of the issues. The government's policy on school-business partnerships also displayed a noticeable "hands-off" approach with respect to dictating policies to the school-districts and individual schools of this province. It was noted by the department official that when the controversial Youth News Network entered this province, approximately eighteen months ago, the Minister of Education had written a letter to the school boards which expressed concern over this, but ultimately left the decision to the school-boards' discretion (Interviewee #1).

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association takes a similar approach to the one put forth by the Department of Education. It largely defines its role as a monitoring one: "Schools that are contemplating entering into a school-business partnership will often call the association to see what the association's position would be on such an arrangement" (Interviewee #4).

In order to answer such requests, and despite the fact that the official position of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association rests on philosophical opposition to school-business partnerships, it has drafted an official policy which outlines the parameters of an acceptable school-business partnership. It should be noted that of course this guideline would be provided to administrators who actively sought it out, and would not represent any mandatory direction for schools to follow.



The school district level plays a more significant role in the leadership process in terms of policy direction. In addition to a monitoring role, similar to that of the Department of Education and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the school districts provide immediate contact and support for individual schools and educational leaders seeking guidance in the area of school-business partnerships:

As the district partnership person, I play a couple of roles. If schools have partnership ideas that they want to establish, I give them support, and then I report back to the district as to how those partnerships are working, and in terms of the work that we organize from the district office out to the district, then it's my job to make sure that the paperwork is done, that the information is disseminated to all who [have] a concern..... to be accountable to develop written reports to make sure that if there's any questions that I get the answers (Interviewee #2).

Both school districts indicated a significant level of "hands-on" support for their schools.

If you look across Canada, you'll find at the district level, not only do they have a facilitator, but they also have significant support that schools can draw on, because it's not something that you want to go at half-heartedly (Interviewee #3).

At the school level, it appears that the role of the educational leader is the most significant. While the degree of control over school-business partnerships varies from one school leader to the next, they collectively exert more control than any other level of leadership. The preferences of individual school leaders range from a virtual monopoly over the situation at the school level to a largely collegial approach. Consider the following examples:

The process that we've set up is that myself and the assistant administrator try and identify the various partners that we should be trying to get inside.... I usually write the proposal, in terms of the partnership, and we basically send it out and wait to hear back (Interviewee #5).

Another administrator reiterated this approach when discussing who was consulted before entering into any partnerships: "Obviously the principal and the assistant principal [are involved].

and I guess the personnel at the [school district] were involved in the process" (Interviewee #9).

One administrator noted that while it was the responsibility of the administration to initiate the process, it was largely a collegial process. Most administrators in fact favored a collegial approach. The following statements are representative of the consensus:

I have [an] encouraging, supporting role. I think I have a selling job [to the business community] to do. I would support my lead teachers in areas like co-operative education and enterprise education and say 'try to recruit partners that will work in their areas' (Interviewee #10).

The team is much stronger than the individual administrator. We've developed a spirit of openness, we have an air of free exchange with the school community and the broader community, and I hope that my teachers feel confident that they can bring any idea that they have to the table and talk with everybody and see what they think (Interviewee #7).

While the participants at the school level varied in their degrees of control over the school-business partnerships in their respective schools, it was clear that the school administrators wielded the greatest amount of control in terms of the administrative groups studied. This is only natural in light of the fact that there is very little in terms of official policies for school leaders to rely upon.

## **SPECIFIC POLICIES**

There are currently no official policies in existence concerning school business partnerships at the district level (among those surveyed) or at the departmental level (Interviewee #1; Interviewee #2; Interviewee #3). The only policy that could be located for educators in this province was the one drafted by the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association mentioned earlier.

The current position of the Department of Education is that this is the type of policy

which should be developed by the school districts of the province, and as a result, no official provincial policy position has been drafted (Interviewee #1). While neither district involved in this research has an official policy drafted on school-business partnerships, it would be remiss to suggest that the issue is not being dealt with. In reference to the Avalon West School District, it was pointed out that,

We do not have a formal policy on paper, but we do have regular meetings of our program specialists and also with our administrative council, and it's more or less an unwritten policy in that before we go into any partnership, it has to fit the strategic plan of the district, and of course the team has to be informed as to what the content of the partnership is before we will develop it. Once there is support for that, then we move forward (Interviewee #2).

This type of support was viewed positively by both school leaders that were interviewed from this district. One noted that the development of a school-business partnership in their district comes about as a result of a team effort, and on the subject of a formal written policy, it was suggested that "policy has a place and we do have policies for a very important reason, but I think that if they give us a policy to follow it is going to limit us" (Interviewee #6).

The district official with the Avalon East School District was not aware of any written policies either, and proffered:

If you ask me whether it's been given the attention at the school, district, province, [or] national level that it really warrants, I'd give you an absolute "no", because it warrants more (Interviewee #3).

None of the school administrators expressed a concern over the lack of a formal policy within their district concerning school-business partnerships. One administrator noted that the area is monitored in different ways and that other board policies may cover certain facets of

school-business partnerships, such as “guidelines that have to be followed, in regards to public tendering and government and board policies” (Interviewee #9). Two administrators noted that they have formalized a policy at the school level to deal with the school-business partnerships entered into through their co-operative education programs (Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10).

The research revealed that the majority of educational leaders who were interviewed did not express any significant concerns over the lack of formal policies in the area of school-business partnerships. While some thought that there should be a policy in place, no administrator indicated that there was a pressing need to do so. Many administrators appeared content with the status quo regarding policy formulation. The participants in this study seemed to favour the concept of local school leaders having the most control over the scope and direction of school-business partnerships.

### **SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AS A NECESSITY**

The fact that the participants in this study preferred a localized construct could be linked to the fact that most of the educational leaders interviewed identified school business partnerships as a necessity. One administrator from the Avalon West School District, in defense of the status quo in terms of policy, noted, “there is some inter-school competition when it comes to these partnerships, because every school wants to get ahead, they want to get the best partnership” (Interviewee #6). The governing principal for this statement then would be that a policy would result in controls that could remove the abilities of ambitious school leaders who would otherwise forge ahead with their own initiatives. This school leader noted that school-business partnerships were a necessity, and a positive one at that:

Our economic state [in this region] is not the greatest... If you're looking at school-business partnerships, you're looking at a whole lot more [for] students. I think it's a positive thing in that regard (Interviewee #6).

This sentiment was echoed by the district official for the Avalon West School District,

who went further, noting that,

I see [school-business partnerships] as absolutely essential, in terms of providing employability skills to our students, in terms of providing the best education possible, the most practical experiences, and I see them as essential in terms of supporting the resource bases needed in schools today where resources are hard to find... So I see partnerships as essential on a lot of fronts (Interviewee #2).

The other school leader from the Avalon West School District saw school-business partnerships as a necessity, but expressed frustration over the amount of time and commitment that school administrators needed to devote to them: "The unfortunate thing is [that] the time is not [available] in the school system [during] the school day for somebody to be doing all of this" (Interviewee #5).

The educational leaders with the Avalon East School District saw school-business partnerships as a necessity. The views were not entirely similar in terms of whether it was a positive or a negative situation, but none of the administrators interviewed saw the necessity as an entirely negative situation, and all of them put some positive viewpoints forward. It was offered by the Avalon East district official that, "How a school can operate to its maximum potential and not have a quality partnership as a part of it, well I can't see it" (Interviewee #3).

The prevailing opinion within this district was perhaps best summed up in the following manner:

I view [school-business] partnerships as a necessity for a number of reasons. Probably first and foremost, [partnerships] provide the additional resources that we would normally

be unable to provide: The things that we can't get from government. That would be a major reason, but I also think that it develops great [public relations] for your school, [and] it develops further connections that develop [additional] resources for your school (Interviewee #9).

Another school leader held largely the same views. However, it was also noted that,

I think that it's sort of a negative connotation when you say you need [emphasis given by interviewee on the word "need"] to go to the business community a number of times per year in order that you can provide what is considered essential programming within your school (Interviewee #8).

This was not meant to suggest that there was not a positive side to the necessity of school-business partnerships, however:

On the positive side, by having good relationships with the business community, the businesses [become] more aware of what you do as a school... They realize that it can be a reciprocal relationship where both [sides] are receiving benefits (Interviewee #8).

The only educational leader who did not view partnerships as a necessity was the spokesperson for the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, who postulated that school-business partnerships should be viewed "as a supplement to what is being offered and paid for by the Department of Education"(Interviewee#4).

In contrast to the above view, the department of education takes a completely different philosophical view towards the subject:

I think that they are a very real necessity, and again, it's based on the philosophy that our education system cannot be a three-step, broken process... The preparation for employment and the preparation for a career in a practical, hands-on way, has to be at a much earlier age and there has to be a linkage between the high schools and the post-secondary [institutions] and the work place, and that can't be done without the involvement of industry and the business community, and that leads to business partnerships (Interviewee #1).

In lieu of any focus on the funding issue, it is clear that the department sees school-business partnerships as an important component of a holistic approach to the education of students in this province at all levels of the system. It is a view which is largely shared with the rest of the educators who were a part of this study. This is despite any of the concerns that they may have held regarding school-business partnerships

### **EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' CONCERNS**

The concerns that the participants held were relatively minor in comparison to the concerns expressed throughout the literature. At the department level (cited earlier), and at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, there were some misgivings expressed with the issue of corporations who were primarily motivated by the potential for profiting from the commercialization of schools:

I hope we never go down the road of saying that it's the business community that has to fund the education system because all of a sudden [we've] gone from a public education system to a commercial education system and going down that road is, I think, very dangerous (Interviewee #4).

At the district level, neither administrator interviewed had any concerns with the current state of school-business partnerships, nor did they foresee any problems for the future in this province. The administrators at the school-level demonstrated an awareness of this issue as well. In reference to the type of partnerships that one administrator would be wary of entering into without consulting the school district, it was stated that "there are those out there [who] are quite willing to come into our building and erect advertising or [bring] in televisions [in exchange for] being allowed to play maybe ninety seconds of advertising during each and every

day”(Interviewee #10). Another administrator furthered these comments by suggesting that in Newfoundland and Labrador, “I think that we’re very aware of the [Canadian] mainland and American experiences with school-business partnerships and we’re wary of just any involvement [because of] the backlash that has resulted from questionable partnerships” (Interviewee#7). These types of partnerships did not seem to be a major factor in the consideration of administrators at any level, and this was likely due to a prevailing sentiment similar to the above reference.

The apparent lack of concern over the dangers of commercialization of the classroom were best illustrated through the major concerns of the two rural school leaders. Both registered their primary concerns as being the fact that there does not seem to be enough interest on the part of major corporations in entering into partnerships with rural schools. One of the rural administrators noted that “In urban schools, you might have a hundred families connected to different businesses in the community, but not out here” (Interviewee #5).

Both rural administrators acknowledged that their partnerships allowed them to provide resources that they felt were extremely important to their schools, which they would otherwise have been unable to provide. These rural administrators considered themselves to be at a disadvantage because they had to compete with schools and regions that were much larger and better-equipped to secure such resources, which put them at a disadvantage. One of these administrators posited that corporations today “want a top-of-the-line presentation.... and the only way to get [the partnership] is you have to have somebody who is qualified to do it” (Interviewee #5). The likelihood then of securing a school-business partnership seems to be related to the



school's existing resources.

A school's resources consist of many things, including personnel. The time to commit personnel to this pursuit was also mentioned as a significant factor by several of the school-administrators in both urban and rural areas. One urban administrator stated that:

It takes a lot of time to develop business partnerships and at any time one of our teachers is going to set up with a new business there is a lot of leg work to find out if the business is going to be able to do what we want it to, in terms of business training plans and following through and everything [else] that's required (Interviewee #8).

A rural administrator confirmed this problem and stated that "The time is just not in the school system, [or] the school day for somebody on staff to be doing all of this" (Interviewee#5). Interviewee #5 actually suggested that the possibility of "contracting out" (Interviewee #5) to a consultant the services of drafting partnership proposals because of such a firm commitment to school-business partnerships: "If somebody can go out and write a proposal for us, and we can gather a thousand dollars, twenty per cent is [the consultant's]" (Interviewee #5). The implications of such a proposal will be explored more thoroughly through the data analysis in the next chapter.

Overall, the concerns of study participants were minor in comparison to the concerns expressed in the literature. The administrators in this study saw many more benefits to school business partnerships than concerns.

## **BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS**

It was made clear from the responses of each participant that school-business partnerships were regarded in as beneficial. There were numerous reasons for this.

The primary motivation for these partnerships is the additional resources that are secured for the public education system through these relationships. At the district level, it was observed that:

When we calculated the cost of the involvement of employers, their time and involvement in youth placements [and] internships, when we looked at what they really offered and then placed some sort of a dollar value on it, it came out to over a million dollars in terms of an 'in-kind' contribution (Interviewee #3).

This idea was confirmed by the other district official, who asserted that "Partnerships provide very useful resources, both human and financial. It supplies resources beyond what we would be able to give to our teachers"(Interviewee #2).

All of the administrators at the school level confirmed the above statement. The rural administrators both acknowledged that the primary motivation for their school-business partnerships was the need for additional resources, and both administrators discussed their partnerships almost exclusively in terms of the financial rewards. The reasons for this were perhaps best summed up in the following manner: "There's no funding for us. Our school budget ran out in the middle of September, and then we become professional fund raisers after that"(Interviewee #5). It was noted by this same individual, however, that school-business partnerships would be pursued regardless of the amount of funding they received because of the importance of bringing the business community into the school system (Interviewee #5).

Urban school leaders also acknowledged the importance of school-business partnerships in providing additional resources for their schools: Until the Department of Education is going to open up their eyes to the fact that the funding that is available to schools for things that schools have to purchase in a school, until they open their eyes and see that it's grossly underfunded, people are going to be looking for whatever mechanisms they can [find] (Interviewee #8)

One administrator also suggested that there is an easy answer to why schools primarily seek to secure school-business partnerships:

I guess the best answer in terms of technology is that we are not provided enough funding by [the] government or [the] school boards to allow us to provide the up to date technology and really in terms of technology and computers for class rooms and students we are not given money by the government for that particular purpose [and as a result], we're not in any financial position to try to provide these types of products that we need in a school (Interviewee #9).

The representative for the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association made it clear that school-business partnerships primarily motivated by the need to procure additional resources are the type which cause the association some concern: "We feel that the public education system is responsible for [providing these resources] and that it shouldn't rest solely on the formation of those types of partnerships that would exploit students" (Interviewee #4). The Department of Education reaffirmed these concerns, but chose to play down the funding gap as an issue. It was emphasized instead, that school-business partnerships represent an opportunity to expose the students of this province to the business world. This was seen as a tremendous benefit to the students:

It's important to have interwoven through the whole education system a career exploration, work experience and the development of employability skills, and certainly that can't happen without a close working relationship and a close partnership between the business community and the education community (Interviewee #1).

This hypothesis was affirmed by all of the educational leaders who participated in this research. At the district level, it was noted that school business partnerships are "absolutely essential, in terms of providing employability skills to our students" (Interviewee #2). Another

district official pointed out that:

Learning is not just taking place in the classroom, it's taking place in the community [and] in the work place. Look at what other provinces have done: In Ontario you cannot graduate [from high school] unless you give at least forty to fifty hours of community service. Alberta, same thing. I'd love to see [this] in this province (Interviewee #3).

The Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association also recognized the importance of school-business partnerships in providing work experience to the students of this province. It was stated that co-operative education has provided a positive outcome for the students of this province because "businesses understood the purpose of such programs.... It wasn't to present them a [captive audience] that they could sell their product to" (Interviewee #4).

The school administrators all saw this type of benefit in school-business partnerships, although the rural administrators placed more emphasis on this than did the urban ones, as was mentioned earlier. One administrator pointed out that,

A lot of the skills that are recognized by employers for getting a job that are known as "soft skills" - they're not hard academic skills - they're working in teams, knowing that you have to meet deadlines, personal interaction, those types of skills that you get by working in team situations in the business community, working in that environment [is] a major benefit to our students (Interviewee #8).

In addition to gaining real employability skills, it was commonly noted that one of the benefits of school-business partnerships was the fostering of a closer relationship with the business community and the larger community as well. A rural school leader posited that, "I think that [partnerships] are a positive necessity, ... regardless of the funding situation.... to get a good understanding of the business [community]" (Interviewee #5).

It was also argued that another important benefit of these partnerships was that the

business community and the community as a whole gain a better understanding of what schools are doing. At the district level it was asserted that "it enables everybody, the whole community, to become a part of a learning organization" (Interviewee #2).

At the school level, it was acknowledged that one of the benefits was the resulting "openness" of schools in comparison to the past, when schools were largely closed to public scrutiny:

We view partnering as opening the doors to the school, a way of informing people of what education is all about today. I mean the media, letters to the [editor], articles in the paper, which are emotionally charged.... I think when we open the doors and show the difficulties that schools are facing, we receive more support in the end (Interviewee #7).

Another school administrator noted that much of the criticism of schools came from businesses and suggested that school business partnerships were a way of both silencing the critics and helping schools to develop and grow:

It's time for me as a school principal and we as educators to [say to corporations] 'tell us where we are deficient [and] we'll certainly work on it, but why don't you put your money where your mouth is and why don't you put your time and effort [into] coming and working with us and help us produce a graduate with a higher degree of employability' (Interviewee #10).

Educational leaders at all levels suggested that there were more benefits than there were concerns with school-business partnerships in this province. One of the defining concerns throughout the literature is that the benefits may to schools and students may be outweighed by the negative results, such as the exploitation of students by profit seeking corporations, or by undue and negative influence on the curriculum (Giroux, 2000; Molnar, 1996; Spring, 1994). The educators who participated in this study did not indicate such concerns. They did however

allude to the idea that educators must remain aware of the issues that are raised in the academic literature and elsewhere. The next chapter will provide a more in-depth analysis of the data in terms of its relevance to the literature.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **ANALYSIS OF DATA**

An analysis of the data was conducted in order to formulate a holistic understanding of school-business partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador. This was accomplished through an analysis of how the responses of the participants illustrate the current operational model of school-business partnerships in this province as viewed by the educational leaders themselves. It was also achieved through an analysis of how their perceptions relate to the prevailing literature on the issue

#### **FREQUENCY AND DISTRIBUTION OF PARTNERSHIPS**

The data revealed that the frequency and distribution of partnerships were uneven. The differences were present in terms of the number of partnerships being utilized by each school involved in the study. It was also notable in terms of the differences between urban and rural schools.

It was stated by rural school administrators that the number of partnerships they had was few in comparison to some urban schools (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6). This was confirmed by the district officials for the Avalon West School District and the Avalon East School District, when they both discussed the numbers of partners that were being used within their district. It was obvious from the data that rural administrators had fewer businesses that they could potentially partner with. Both rural administrators suggested that they would like to have more partnerships, but felt that their options were limited because of a lack of businesses within their jurisdiction (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6).

It should be noted, however, that the difference in partnering numbers between rural schools and urban schools in this province cannot be completely attributed to geography. The data revealed that the commitment to co-operative education by the Avalon East School District was seen as larger than any other institution in Eastern Canada (Interviewee #2). This would reflect an ideological commitment on the part of this school district which must be taken into account. This idea was confirmed by a Department of Education official who noted that the department had allocated discretionary revenue to all of the school districts and that the Avalon East School District chose to invest a significant proportion of this revenue in co-operative education and school-business partnerships (Interviewee #1).

It should also be noted that the Avalon West School District has demonstrated a commitment to school-business partnerships. It has a partnerships co-ordinator and handles partnerships with approximately forty businesses (Interviewee#3). It was also apparent that this district wants these type of activities to expand. Yet despite this, it has few partnerships in comparison to the Avalon East School District. As a result, it would be impossible to conclude that geography and a lack of local businesses is not significant.

In terms of the literature, the critics of school-business partnerships would not be surprised by these findings. Taylor (1992) posits that "businesses tend to give in their own areas: often a poor, rural [school] has virtually no chance at a partnership" (p. 25). Sharp and Sharp point out that businesses "prefer selective approaches to research and student sponsorship" (p. 82). One rural administrator in this study asserted that many businesses they have approached in the past from outside of the local community already had partnerships "in their local area"



(Interviewee #5). One of the urban schools in this study has secured a partnership with a professional sports team located in St. John's (Interviewee #9). The administrator at this school noted many philanthropic donations and activities which took place within this school on behalf of this partner. This is a clear example of a school-business partnership which would be unavailable to a rural school.

At this point it should be observed that almost all of the businesses involved in school-business partnerships were provincially-based. Both rural administrators said that the partners in their school were a direct result of their location within the community (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6). Only one urban administrator acknowledged a partnership with a company that was not located in the province (Interviewee #9). In terms of the province as a whole, it was suggested that the only other company involved in school-business partnerships in this province which was not located here was the YNN partnership, currently operating in central Newfoundland at a rural school (Interviewee#1; Interviewee#4). It would appear that schools in this province mirror the reality of this province in general, in terms of being able to attract businesses outside of this province to invest here.

## **TYPES OF PARTNERSHIPS**

It was demonstrated in the literature that discourse on school-business partnerships is interwoven throughout the literature which includes discourse on many different issues. This is likely due to the fact that it is a part of the larger issue of reforming public education so that it is perceived as achieving the expectations of society, government and the business community.

It was also established that there is a great deal of disagreement among the various

interested parties to this debate. In spite of this, reform of public education has been going on everywhere, including here in this province. The type of reform that has taken place also varies. So does the degree to which it occurs. Keeping in mind that school-business partnerships are both directly and indirectly a result of public education reform, one would expect to see a wide range in terms of the types of school-business partnerships. This was confirmed by both the literature, and the data from the interviews in this study. Several different types of partnerships are recognized by the educational leaders from this province, and there were differing opinions on their use. The strongest testimony to the differing opinions on certain kinds of partnerships could be seen in their use (or non-use) by schools in this province.

It was clear that educational leaders in Newfoundland and Labrador prefer the kinds of partnerships which were realized through the co-operative education program. Several educational leaders from St. John's made it clear that co-operative education was their single largest form of school-business partnership (Interviewee #3; Interviewee #7; Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10). Educational leaders in the St. John's region were especially in favour of this program as a means of bridging the gap between schools and the workplace: "Our students are getting the benefits of the expertise that businesses have" (Interviewee #8). The department official and the representative of the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association also expressed their approval for co-operative education. In the words of the department official:

The preparation for a career in a practical, hands-on way has to be at a much earlier age and there has to be a linkage between the high schools and the work place, and that can't be done without the involvement of industry and the business community, which leads to school-business partnerships (Interviewee#11).

The rural school district in this study did not show any indication of a co-operative education program in place to date. There was no clear indication as to why this was so, in spite of the fact that there was strong support at the district level for school-business partnerships. An obvious reason for discussion would be the issue of finance. Co-operative education was first introduced in this province as an initiative of the federal government (Interviewee #1). When the funding for this program was withdrawn by the federal government, the provincial government allocated some funding to the school districts, but it was discretionary, and the districts were left with the decision of whether or not to apply the funding towards co-operative education (Interviewee #1). In these times of financial constraint, it would be difficult to find fault with a school district which chose to allocate discretionary spending in an area other than that of co-operative education, especially when there are so many areas that are perceived as being in urgent need of additional funding by the educational leaders of this province.

Certainly the need for additional funding could be viewed as a primary reason for the type of partnerships that were witnessed in the rural district that was a part of this study. The official for Avalon West indicated that the district was involved in approximately forty different partnerships, which provided additional resources, "both human and financial..., beyond what we would be able to give our teachers" (Interviewee #2). The type of partnership that the rural district (and its schools) were involved in would be characterized as a sponsorship-type. Both rural schools in this study were involved in a partnership with a large corporation based in Newfoundland and Labrador which provided the schools with services and financial contributions, mainly in the form of computer technology (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6). In

exchange for these contributions, the corporations received very little, other than a public acknowledgment by the school of the support that they received (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6).

These sponsorship-type arrangements, which are undoubtedly in use in most schools throughout the province, were downplayed by the educational leaders in St. John's with the exception of one administrator (Interviewee #9). They did not really consider this as an important kind of partnership for several reasons. It was noted, for example, that they didn't see the sponsor as getting very much out of the arrangement. One administrator noted that "it has to truly be something that both parties receive [benefits] from. If there isn't [mutual benefits], it varies to a degree, but generally they don't last in the long-term" (Interviewee #7). Another administrator referred to sponsorships as being of lesser importance than the "type of partner that is keenly interested in helping us bring our students to a higher level of educational potential" (Interviewee #10). None of the educational leaders in this study advocated the type of partnership which would allow a business to influence the curriculum in a way that could be considered controversial. The co-operative education program is part of the provincially approved curriculum and it provides students in this province with work experience. It was also noted that members of the business community were invaluable contributors of time and effort for such things as motivational speaking and helping schools provide awards for outstanding achievement for students (Interviewee #7, Interviewee #9).

Sponsorship-type partnerships are controversial because of the growing concern over the commercialization of the classroom and the privatization of public education (Barlow and

Robertson, 1994; Robertson, 1998; Shaker, October, 1999). Many espouse concerns that schools are going to become so dependant on private funding that public schools will be unduly influenced by the interests of the business community (Barlow and Robertson, 1994; Molnar, 1996; Rank, 1993; Robertson, 1998; Shaker, 1999, October; Spring, 1994). Educators in this province have voiced concerns over this as well (Browne, 2000; Wood, 2000), especially in reference to accepting partnerships of the kind that are offered by groups such as YNN. The single administrator who has accepted a partnership with YNN in this province suggested that we do not need to guard against all advertising in schools, but against "the presence of unacceptable advertising" (Mullins, 2000, p. 3). Mullins (2000) also invited the editor of The bulletin to come and visit this school and get a first-hand view of how this program had benefitted the students in this rural community. Several attempts were made by this researcher to gain access to this school in order to acquire an understanding of the perceptions of its administration without success.

Shaker (1999, December) points out that the proposal from YNN requires schools to use a part of the instructional day (p. 20). Because no interview with the educational leaders at this school could be secured, it remains unclear how this school secured permission to use ten minutes of school time every day in order to fulfill its obligations. Regardless, this is still the type of partnership that the educational leaders who were a part of this study were aware of and (to date) have chosen to steer avoid. The type that were preferred were those that did not contain direct influences on the use of the instructional day or modifications to existing provincially approved curriculum. This was a unanimous sentiment among all the educational leaders in this study. All of the participants at the school level indicated that advertising was done at minimal

levels. It was also emphasized that sponsorship activities were being done in order to supplement the extra-curricular activities or co-curricular activities in the school. Sponsorships were largely viewed as a form of fund raising. This does not lessen their significance to schools, yet the educational leaders in St. John's preferred to emphasize the other types of partnerships referred to earlier. Clearly the educational leaders of this province have accepted the type of school reform which includes input from the business community, but refrains from what they would perceive as an undue influence on curriculum.

#### **ROLE OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERS**

The data revealed that all of the participants claimed a leadership role, although the degree of control varied. At the departmental and district level, and at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, the role of the educational leaders was largely a monitoring and consulting one. The educational leaders at the school level played a predominant role in terms of monitoring school-business partnerships, and this also varied in terms of the control wielded by individual administrators. Some of the educational leaders at the school level delegated responsibility to "lead teachers" (Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10), or viewed the process of developing school-business partnerships as something that should be conducted through consultation with the entire school staff (Interviewee #7). Other school administrators maintained a virtual monopoly over the securing of school-business partnerships (Interviewee #5, Interviewee #9). Educational leaders at the school level have naturally assumed primacy over school-business partnerships. The main reason is that school-business partnerships are a part of the fund-raising process, which falls under their jurisdiction. This makes sense because it is the

school leaders who probably have the best understanding of the overall needs and goals of their schools. The literature expressed some concern that individual schools or school administrators may be too eager to enter into school partnerships because of the need for certain resources (Barlow and Robertson, 1994; Robertson, 1998; Taylor, 1992). A number of writers suggest that schools and school leaders may fail to recognize that they have actually entered into a partnership that is not in the best interests of their students (Robertson, 1998, Giroux, 2000).

The data from this study suggests that this is not the case. It was clear from the responses of the participants that they are aware of the prevailing literature in educational circles concerning school-business partnerships. Some of the school administrators in this study directly referred to the current trends in the literature, noting the criticism of the public education system that has been on-going for the past two decades and also noting the dangers of flirting with privatization that have been learned about through the American experience (Interviewee #7; Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10).

In light of the responses from the educational leaders in this study, the literature which suggests that administrators would "sell out" to corporate interests does not appear to be congruent with the situation in this province. Indeed, if one were to expect to witness this, the pedagogy of Newfoundland and Labrador would be the place one would expect to see it. Newfoundland is arguably Canada's poorest province. It also faces the difficult task providing public education to many remote communities which means that every education dollar has to be spread thinner than in a place with many urban centers or with a compacted population. In spite of this, the commercialization of the class room has not been as prolific as in other areas of North

America. The Department of Education for Newfoundland and Labrador has cautioned schools against the use of commercial ventures that would provide companies with captive markets even though they may see the rewards offered by these corporate interests as very appealing (Interviewee #1). Collectively, the educational leaders in this study have displayed a greater concern for sound pedagogical choices in education than for the potential resources that could be secured through commercial ventures with corporate interests. They unanimously postulated that the operation of successful school-business partnerships requires extensive time and commitment on behalf of both partners involved in the process. This time was required in order to effectively plan programs that benefit both the schools and the businesses involved. Most of the educational leaders stated outright that it was counter-productive to even attempt to secure a school-business partnership without a clear design and specific goals in mind (Interviewee #1; Interviewee #2; Interviewee #3; Interviewee #6; Interviewee #7; Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10). The educational leaders in this province exhibited what was referred to by one participant as a "student-first philosophy" (Interviewee #2).

### **SPECIFIC POLICIES**

The data revealed that there are currently no official policies in existence at the department level (Interviewee #1) or at the district level (Interviewee #2; Interviewee #3). The only policy in place for educators in Newfoundland and Labrador was a draft document at the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association, which would serve as a guideline and not a policy that has to be followed (Interviewee #4). Educational leaders at all levels displayed mixed reactions to the idea of adopting policies that must be adhered to.



At the Department of Education it was suggested that no policy was drafted because it was considered to be a district responsibility (Interviewee #1). At the district level, one administrator noted that while they did not have a formal policy specific to school-business partnerships, any partnerships that were being considered by a school or the district had "to fit the strategic plan of the district" (Interviewee #3). As a result, it was inferred that this negated the need for additional policies. The other district official suggested that there was a need for a policy to be put in place, and suggested that this topic has not yet received the consideration that it deserves at any of the levels of governance concerned (Interviewee#2).

At the school level, none of the educational leaders expressed any concern with a lack of policies in this area. While some thought that there should be a policy in place, no administrator believed that there was a pressing need to do so. Most were actually content with the status quo. In light of the discourse in the previous section dealing with the role of educational leaders concerning school-business partnerships, similar conclusions may be drawn from the implications of a lack of formalized policies. Educational leaders in this province appear to prefer control over school-business partnerships at the school level. This is not meant to suggest that schools have complete freedom to pursue whatever partnerships they may choose to. Their actions are monitored by the school districts, the Department of Education, and the Newfoundland and Labrador Teachers' Association (Interviewee #1; Interviewee #2; Interviewee #3; Interviewee #4). It is clear, however, that localized control was favoured so that any school-business partnership would better reflect the individual needs and goals of individual schools.

As long as the educational leaders of Newfoundland and Labrador continue to act with

the needs of the students of this province at the forefront, there does not seem to be a need for immediate changes in the current arrangement. The concerns of some in the academic community, however, should not be completely discounted at this point. As school budgets decline in real dollars, schools must become more flexible in terms of the programs that they are able to offer. They must also become more creative in how they secure the resources they deem as necessary which may not be provided by the district or department level. This leaves school administrators with a dilemma: At a certain point, these leaders may have to choose between providing students with a resource or program that they perceive as essential, and accepting a partnership that they may not be entirely comfortable with. Browne (2000) posited that one could hardly blame a school in Newfoundland and Labrador for accepting the partnership offer with YNN, but still rejected it as pedagogically unsound. In spite of a vocal rejection of this kind of partnering by a number of educational leaders in this province, one school is utilizing this service. Clearly the administrator at this school felt that the point had been reached where this type of partnership was a necessity. It leaves one to wonder how much longer it will be before this type of partnership becomes more frequent; how long, that is, until more educational leaders in the schools of this province view this type of partnership as necessary.

#### **SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS AS A NECESSITY**

The data revealed that the educational leaders in this study saw partnering with the business community as a very real necessity. The most common theme which came up in the discourse was the additional resources these partnerships provide to the students, teachers, and schools of this province. It was repeatedly pointed out that partnering with businesses enabled

schools to “provide resources that we would normally be unable to provide: The things that we can’t get from [the provincial] government” (Interviewee #9). It was clear that the interviewees saw school-business partnerships as a necessity for their fund raising efforts, because of the availability of contributions from the business community beyond what schools could hope to raise from the community in general:

The bottom line is if you’re not going to get support from the business community, then all that’s left for you to do is sent out a letter to parents, saying ‘would you please make a donation of so much money per year’, and that’s simply not going to happen (Interviewee #8).

Only one interviewee did not see school-business partnerships as a necessity, preferring to view them instead as a supplement to what was currently being offered through the public system (Interviewee #4). All of the educational leaders who participated in this study saw a tremendous value in the additional resources which could be secured through partnering.

Yet the provision of additional resources was not the only reason that school-business partnerships were viewed as a necessity. Many of the participants stressed the necessity of including the business community and the community in general in the public education paradigm:

Schools in the past didn’t let the public know what was going on in the schools, and we view partnering as opening the doors to the school, as a way of informing people of what education is all about today (Interviewee #7).

The response to criticisms of public education was a recurring theme:

I think it’s critical for the business community and the professional community to come into the schools. The schools are more open than they’ve ever been. You know, gone are the closed-door policies of the 1970s where schools seemed to be the bastions of education, and nobody else was allowed to help us do our job. Well I think today we are

bringing the village into the school. We're saying to the community: 'You have a role to play here, come in and help us.' And I think today we are all benefitting from when that occurred (Interviewee#10).

This view was also prevalent in the discourse with the interviewee from the Department of Education; in fact it was the single issue that was largely stressed:

It's important to have interwoven through the whole education system a career exploration, work experience and the development of employability skills, and certainly that can't happen without a close working relationship without a close working relationship and a close partnership between the business community and the education community (Interviewee #1).

While the above views were also espoused by the educational leaders from the Avalon West school district, there was a much heavier emphasis on the resource element of school-business partnerships. The district official saw numerous reasons for the necessity of school-business partnerships:

I see them as absolutely essential, in terms of providing employability skills to our students, in terms of providing the best education possible, the most practical experiences, and I see them essential in terms of supporting the resource bases needed in schools today where resources are hard to find (Interviewee #2).

In spite of a rather holistic philosophy behind the goals of school business partnerships described by the district official with the rural school district, the educational leaders at the school level in the two rural schools placed most of their emphasis on the necessity of school-business partnerships for the extra resources they provided as a form of fund-raising (Interviewee #5: Interviewee #6). One of these participants viewed school-business partnerships as vital to the daily operations of the school, but noted that it was too time-consuming to pursue the desired partnerships. As a result, it was asserted that "We're at a stage where we're looking at

contracting this out" (Interviewee #5). Elaborating on this, it was suggested that consultants would be hired to find potential partners for the school, and a "finder's fee" (Interviewee#5) would be paid to the consultant: "If somebody can go out and write a proposal for us, and we can gather a thousand dollars, [then] twenty per cent is theirs"(Interviewee #5). It is likely that this kind of statement would sound alarms with the critics of business involvement in education. Yet the cause for alarm should arguably not be focused on school-business partnerships themselves, nor with this particular leadership decision.

A major discussion on the inequality of educational opportunities between rural and urban schools in Newfoundland and Labrador is beyond the scope of this research, however, this research has revealed an inequality of opportunity for securing school-business partnerships in terms of rural versus urban schools. The dialogue has also revealed that rural educational leaders voice a more pressing need for school-business partnerships because of the resources that may be secured from them. In this context, school-business partnerships should not merely be seen as a means of securing additional resources; in fact they should be regarded as a resource. In viewing school-business partnerships as a resource, one can consider the inability of rural educational leaders to secure them in a different light. The educational leader who secures the services of a consultant to secure school-business partnerships is revealing a great deal about the perceived necessity of this particular resource. It also reveals a great deal about the lack of existing resources in this school in regard to personnel and time constraints for keeping this kind of activity at the school level. In essence what occurs here is the creation of a partnership to secure additional school-business partnerships. It is the perceived necessity for school-business

partnerships and other resources in rural schools which is highlighted in this kind of response. It must also be remembered that the consultant would not have a say in whether or not the school actually partnered with anyone. The school and district leaders, not to mention the potential business partner, would ultimately decide if a partnership would go ahead.

### **EDUCATIONAL LEADERS' CONCERNS**

The primary concern throughout the literature in opposition to school-business partnerships deals with the ramifications associated with schools that are dominated by the interests of the business community (Barlow & Robertson, 1994; Molnar, 1996; Rank, 1993; Robertson, 1998; Shaker, 1999, October; Spring, 1994). By comparison, the educational leaders in this study held relatively minor concerns. Indeed, some of the interviewees expressed concerns that there was not enough being done by the public education community to facilitate partnerships with the business community: (Interviewee #3; Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6; Interviewee #10). This attitude was especially prevalent among the rural educational leaders in this study, who felt that they were at a disadvantage in comparison to urban schools in terms of their opportunities for securing school-business partnerships (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6).

While this concern is minor in comparison to the fears of commercialization in the classroom, it should not be overlooked. It is probable that the public education system in Newfoundland and Labrador will continue to suffer from a lack of resources that educational leaders perceive as essential for the students of this province. Because the leaders view them as essential, they will continue to seek assistance in securing them. The data has displayed that school-business partnerships are seen as an important tool which provides, among other things, a

means for securing additional resources. Moreover, the multi-faceted nature of school-business partnerships leads to the conclusion that school-business partnerships can themselves be viewed as a resource. In this climate, it is essential that the decision-makers within the public education paradigm of Newfoundland and Labrador display an awareness of the issues that have been raised throughout the literature as well as through the experiences of other public education paradigms.

Fortunately, the data also reveals that the educators in this study do display an awareness of these things, as was evidenced by the following: "We're very aware of the [Canadian] mainland and American experiences with school-business partnerships, and we're wary of just any involvement" (Interviewee #7). This sentiment was echoed by others (Interviewee #1; Interviewee #4; Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10). It is a situation which must continue and would likely benefit from any increase in the discourse. This is especially true when one considers the other "minor" concern that was expressed in the data: The lack of time and resources available for securing school-business partnerships.

Several leaders noted that securing school-business partnerships was extremely time-consuming and taxing on the human resources available to schools (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6; Interviewee #7; Interviewee #8; Interviewee #9; Interviewee #10). This seems to clash with the assertion by all of the interviewees who posited that careful planning and preparation is vital prior to entering into any partnership agreement. An ironic situation could arise where a decline in resources at the school level leads to an increased dependence on partnerships. It would be ironic because securing partnerships is a task which appears to sap resources (time and

personnel) from schools. This leads to questions of whether or not there could be a “diminishing returns” effect on school-business partnerships. It is possible that the very dependence on school-business partnerships could negate their efficacy. This is a likely scenario if schools were to become too dependent on them in terms of the additional resources that they may provide. From the data gathered for this study, it does not appear that there is any danger of this at the present time. The appearance of YNN in a school in this province would suggest that the likelihood is not impossible. The administrative leader who accepted this partnership is aware of the literature and the criticism of this proposition, but has decided that the benefits of this deal outweigh the arguments put forth in opposition to it (Mullins, 2000). The leaders involved in this study did not indicate a preference for this type of partnership, and several were vocally opposed to it (Interviewee #1; Interviewee #4; Interviewee #7; Interviewee #8; Interviewee #10). If one school, however, can decide to travel this route, then surely others can as well. The question that remains then is when, if at all, should the educational leaders of Newfoundland and Labrador refrain from seeking the support of the business community for public education.

## **BENEFITS OF SCHOOL-BUSINESS PARTNERSHIPS**

An examination of the data reveals that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish the difference between a benefit and a necessity. The reasons that were given for school-business partnerships being a necessity often mirrored the identified benefits of school-business partnerships. This stands to reason, as something that helps you achieve a necessity is indeed beneficial. In the case of school-business partnerships, the foremost reason that they were perceived as being beneficial was the fact that they provided educators with “resources that we



would otherwise be unable to provide" (Interviewee #9). This particular benefit was acknowledged by all of the interviewees. It was not the only benefit, however.

One of the major themes in the literature concerning the growing influence of the business community is the criticism of public education by the business community, among other groups who feel that they have a vested interest in public education. The business community has vocally denounced the abilities of the graduates of our public education system, repeatedly asserting that these graduates fall short of expectations, even basic requirements. The educational leaders in this study hypothesized that school-business partnerships could be a means of bringing educators and the business community together with a common goal of bettering the public education system. In reference to this criticism, one of the participants offered, "By all means, criticize us if you wish, but talk to us, and if there are identified problems, why not sit down and work towards solutions?" (Interviewee #10). It was also noted that not only could schools change to reflect the needs of the business community, but that coming into the schools could alter the perceptions of the business community regarding public schools:

We view partnering as a way of informing people of what education is all about today... When we open the doors and show the difficulties that schools are facing, we receive more support in the end (Interviewee #7).

Making the public education system more open and accessible was seen as beneficial to both the educational and business communities. In general, it was perceived by the participants in this research that at present, there were very few benefits that were more significant than this. The participants in this study viewed the participation of the business community as largely philanthropic at this point. A few participants noted that this philanthropy provided good public

relations for the corporations involved (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #6; Interviewee #9). It was also posited that philanthropy provides rewards down the road for these corporations in the form of customer loyalty, and the potential for luring future business (Interviewee #5; Interviewee #9).

Nevertheless, it was made clear by the interviewees that the for-profit type of school business partnerships are not currently being sought after, and as a result there was very little that schools were offering in return for partnership agreements. Despite this, the business community of Newfoundland and Labrador has indeed responded. While there were those who would have liked to see a greater response, especially in rural areas, there is no doubt that the business community of this province plays an active role in school-business partnerships and expects little from the schools in return.

## **CHAPTER SIX**

### **SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **SUMMARY**

This study has revealed that school-business partnerships are firmly entrenched in certain areas of Newfoundland and Labrador and that they are going to continue to play a part in the public schools of this province in the future. The participants in this study held a favourable opinion regarding school-business partnerships. They embraced this opinion because of the nature of the partnerships that they all had encountered. None had any negative experiences to report. Support for school business partnerships was in evidence at all levels of educational governance. This was in spite of the fact that the concept lacks comprehensive policies or a clear definition. The participants in this study all held slightly different views on what the definition was. Some of the interviewees held rather narrow views of the definition, while others viewed them in a rather broad manner. Whatever definition the interviewees adhered to, they perceived that the current use and status of school-business partnerships in this province was highly beneficial and positive.

The interviewees held very few reservations regarding these partnerships. Any concerns they did express were considered minor by the participants and they preferred to emphasize the positive benefits that the students received from any arrangement between schools and businesses, especially in the area of co-operative education and the development of information technology skills.

It should be noted that this is to be expected from educational leaders who were largely

involved in school-business partnerships. Nevertheless, the leaders collectively displayed both a general knowledge of the issues surrounding their use, as well as insight into their practical applications in the schools of Newfoundland and Labrador.

The participants in this study provided the researcher with a better understanding of school-business partnerships in Newfoundland and Labrador. The interviewees and the literature provided the researcher with a means for making general observations and recommendations based on the nature of school-business partnerships, the decision-making that is involved in the partnership process and present and future policy directions which should be pursued.

#### **NATURE OF PARTNERSHIPS**

The research revealed that, regardless of their differences of opinion on a specific definition of school-business partnerships, generally the participants viewed partnerships in terms of two broad categories. One of these was the sponsorship-type, where schools received financial contributions or tangible resources of some kind in exchange for a public relations promotion, such as advertising within the school, or a formal acknowledgment of the contribution.

Most of the participants in this study were quick to point out that this type of partnership reflected a philanthropic activity on behalf of the businesses involved, as they received relatively little from schools in exchange for their financial support. None of the participants viewed the sponsorship activities that their schools were involved in as harmful to students, as none of the sponsorships involved alterations to the curriculum, nor did they require students to regularly engage the sponsors during school time, as the YNN proposal does.

The participants in this study from the St. John's region tended to play down this type of partnership as being less important than the partnerships which gave students first-hand experiences with the business community. The educational leaders who participated in this study from rural Newfoundland stressed that school-business partnerships were essential for providing resources beyond those provided by their district and the government. In this context, school-business partnerships were viewed as a necessity by both rural and urban educational leaders. However, it was pointed out that partnerships were important for a variety of reasons, regardless of their significance in terms of resource provisions. This sentiment was confirmed by all of the educational leaders in the study.

The second major category of school-business was confined in practice to the St. John's region for this study. It consisted of the business experience that students received, largely through the co-operative education program. The educational leaders at all levels and from all regions expressed support for this type of program and indicated that they would like to see it expanded upon. The interviewees indicated an ideological commitment to this type of partnership. They did so because the work experience is seen as a clear step in the direction of decreasing the gap between the schools and the workplace. In an educational climate where the Department of Education has expressed the need for publicly funded schools at all levels to commit to this, it is recommended here that the provincial government expand upon this program. The schools of this province should receive resources that are specifically ear-marked for this type of program. In doing so, the government would display a commitment to decrease the gap between schools and the workforce by granting the schools of this province the resources

to do so.

## **DECISION-MAKING**

Any steps that the government may take in this direction would be in accordance with the policy directions it has outlined in the Schools Act (1997). Section 24 (2)(g) of the Schools Act states that school principals must “promote co-operation between the school and the communities”. Certainly it can be inferred that this would include many different facets of the community, including the business community, as support for this has been noted in other government policy documents concerning education (Economic Planning Group Advisory Committee Department of Education, 1992, p. 3).

The data from this research revealed that educational leaders at the school level wield the greatest amount of decision-making authority in securing school-business partnerships. The importance of the above is better illustrated when this is taken into account. The current structure allows for a variety of possible decisions for individual administrators in this regard. There are benefits to such an approach. Administrators are empowered to seek school-business partnerships which are tailored to fit the perceived needs and desired outcomes of their school. However, it also raises concerns about administrators acting with good intentions who may pursue options that go beyond the boundaries deemed acceptable by the various levels of educational governance, or beyond what would be considered acceptable by the various educational stakeholders throughout Newfoundland and Labrador.

As noted earlier, to date there is only one school participating in a school-business partnership in Newfoundland and Labrador that is considered to be controversial in nature.

Because the researcher was unable to secure an interview with the educational leaders in this school, it remains unclear how the school and the district deals with the issue of lost class time for the display of television advertisements. According to Shaker (1999, December), the arrangement with YNN requires a school to show 2 minutes of advertisements every school day (p. 20). This translates into approximately six and two thirds worth of instructional periods (assuming the use of a fourteen day teaching schedule) per student per year devoted solely to commercial advertising. Immediately, it would appear that this exceeds the responsibilities of educational leaders at the school level. A closer examination, however, reveals that the situation is not so simplistic. Certainly a case could be made for the inclusion of the commercials to fulfill curriculum outcomes in areas such as Social Studies or even Religion. An educator could, for example discuss the commercials with students in terms of the marketing strategies used by the advertisers in business courses such as Enterprise Education or even Consumer Studies, or the commercials could be discussed with direct reference to the ethical and moral dilemmas presented by the use of advertising in schools in courses such as religion.

The entrepreneur responsible for the creation of Channel One (the American predecessor to YNN) purchased an entire page of the New York Times in 1989 in order to make a public appeal for permission to bring Channel One into the state's schools. Whittle (1989) argued that Channel One should "be judged primarily on the basis of what it brings to the [educational] experience of the students" (p. D32). It is doubtful, however, if Whittle had in mind the idea of students critically examining the advertisements they were being shown. Certainly the advertisers could become wary of being portrayed in a negative light. Any such action would

prove disastrous for a company such as Channel One, which received (in 1996 figures) "close to \$200,000 every time a 30 second commercial was broadcast" (Molnar, 1996, p. 61).

In any event, such fears were unjustified, according to some critics of Channel One. Referring to quantitative studies, researchers hypothesized that students who participated in the Channel One viewing program were more likely to hold consumer values such as "money is everything", or "a nice car is more important than school" (Greenberg and Brand, 1993, December/1994, January, p. 56). Assuredly, it would be difficult to find an educational leader in this province who would knowingly permit this to happen. However, to date, there is no evidence that any studies have been conducted in this province to measure the effects of YNN on students in this province. One of the common themes which arose in the responses of all of the interviewees was the need for sound planning and preparation prior to securing a school-business partnership. Because YNN is currently operating in this province, there should be studies conducted which seek to measure its overall efficacy. The issues raised above simply cannot be handled by the administrative team at the school level. The current role which the Department of Education has opted for is a monitoring one. It is the belief of this researcher that these are issues which require the attention of leaders at all levels of educational governance. It is thus recommended here that the Department of Education should resolve to accomplish two things. Firstly, it should increase its monitoring of this situation through the implementation or encouragement of qualitative and quantitative studies on the efficacy of these kinds of partnerships for Newfoundland and Labrador's public schools. Secondly, it should follow the examples being set by the Avalon West School District and the Avalon East School District, by



establishing an internal position that is solely devoted to school-business partnerships. This would likely ensure the implementation of the first recommendation and it would facilitate the most current awareness of the impact of school business partnerships.

## **PRESENT AND FUTURE POLICY**

In 1992, the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador published a policy paper which, among other things, outlined an approach for reshaping the public education system so that it would better reflect the needs of the emerging global economy. It was emphasised that the responsibility for education and training was shared by "government, business, labour, and the community" (1992, p. 3). This paper went as far as to suggest that it was vital for "key stakeholders in the public and private sector [to] recognize their common interests and mutual interdependence" (1992, p. 44). This sentiment was confirmed in the responses of the department official involved in this study. The Government of Newfoundland and Labrador would like to operate a public school system which realizes a decrease in the gap between publicly funded educational institutions (at all levels) and the work force. This is what the business community has been calling for. The government would likely respond favourably to any reform of the educational system which might attract future investment from business. In spite of this, the government has not followed through on these policy initiatives.

The co-operative education program has been allowed to decline as districts were no longer granted money specifically ear-marked for this program (Interviewee# 1, Interviewee #8). In rural Newfoundland and Labrador, school-business partnerships are seen as so important in terms of making up budgetary deficits that securing partnerships with individuals or groups who

can secure more partnerships is being considered (Interviewee #5). Ironically, the above examples show how fiscal restraint actually hinders the implementation of a government policy that could ultimately ease some of the financial burden of public education. If there is a decrease in the gap between the workplace and schools, it remains to be seen if it will stimulate the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador. Yet there is only one way to determine if such a proposition could be successful: the gap between schools and work would indeed have to be decreased. School-business partnerships appear to provide a worthwhile solution which should be pursued. The combined benefits of work experience and the possibility of securing additional funding are both ventures that schools should endeavour to achieve. They should do so, however with caution. The risk of entering into partnerships that are educationally unsound cannot be discounted. There is not enough known about the nature of partnerships such as YNN in this province yet to make a definitive pronouncement. Perhaps this is reason enough for the educators to refrain from its use. Keeping in mind the fact that YNN is currently operating in Newfoundland and Labrador, the government of this province would be wise to keep a closer watch on the situation. Surely if one school in Newfoundland and Labrador can justify entering into the agreement with YNN, than others may as well.

At this juncture, it seems pertinent for the leadership with regard to school-business partnerships be heard at the highest levels. Let the Department of Education give this issue greater attention through the encouragement of qualitative and quantitative research and the dissemination of this information to the educators of Newfoundland and Labrador. It should be able to assist the educational leaders throughout this province in making decisions concerning

school-business partnerships that are suitable for their schools and community standards. This also needs to be extended beyond information; it needs to include other resources as well. This appears to be especially true for rural schools in Newfoundland and Labrador, who lack the resources to provide programming such as co-operative education, or simply are unable to secure partnerships because of a lack of businesses located within the school community.

Finally, this research has largely illustrated an approach to school-business partnerships that has positive results for those involved. The data has shown that there are many reasons for this, including the generosity and philanthropy of the business community of Newfoundland and Labrador, and the will of educational leaders at various levels to see these partnerships realized. Yet perhaps the main reason for their success lies in the efforts of the educational leaders who are devoted to these projects. All of the individuals involved in this study stressed the amount of time, energy and additional personnel resources that are required for the functioning of these partnerships to be successful. This must be maintained as the cornerstone of the formulation of school-business partnerships. Educational leaders at all levels, including the Department of Education and all levels of academic institutions must place more emphasis on this issue. We are witnessing the convergence of the interests of public educational stakeholders and the interests of the business community at unprecedented levels. This necessitates an increased awareness of the implications of this phenomenon. This in turn will help ensure that, above all else, the best interests of the students of Newfoundland and Labrador are put first.

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