Public/Private Partnerships in Education

Their nature and contribution to educational provision and improvement

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The growing involvement of the private sector in education in the last few years has been commented upon but often misinterpreted as privatisation and as a new phenomenon. We believe that some of these developments are significant in both their nature and form but have not been fully understood. The purpose of this paper is to analyse these developments and provide a framework for understanding them and their implications for educational leaders. This paper reports on two studies, one a partnership between the public and private sector for the delivery of LEA services, and the second a public/private partnership to turn around a failing school. The paper provides an overview of the context in which the public/private partnerships are set, and it then moves on to examine four key factors that structure the dimensions of public/private partnerships:

**Preconditions for partnerships**
- a large, difficult but solvable problem
- creative thinking
- aligned incentives
- willingness to pursue the tendering process
- ability to attract and then negotiate with prospective partners
- capacity to undertake partnerships

**Change dimensions that emerge as a result of effective partnerships**
- enhance the capacity and capability of senior LEA or school staff
- change the staff or the mind set of the existing staff
- change the perception that no significant change was likely to take place
- raise expectations of ‘acceptable’ practices
- change schooling practices and services

**Mechanisms for partnering**
- formalising the partnership through service agreements or contracts
- staffing the partnership through cross-seconding of staff and employment specifications
- operating the partnership through decision-making procedures

**Success indicators of effective partnerships**
- increased focus on core tasks
- enhanced service quality through enhanced human capital
- improved performance on outcomes – both processes and products
- proactive leadership style
- increasingly entrepreneurial culture and attitude reflected in behaviour
Introduction

The last five years have seen a significant increase in the involvement of the private sector in education in the core areas of education delivery and not just in the provision of educational support services. The growing involvement of the private sector in education in the last few years has been commented upon but often misinterpreted as privatisation and as a new phenomenon. We believe that some of these developments are significant in both their nature and form but have not been fully understood. The purpose of this paper is to analyse these developments and provide a framework for understanding them and their implications for educational leaders. This paper reports on two studies, one a partnership between the public and private sector for the delivery of LEA services, and the second a public/private partnership to replace a failing school with a successful one. The paper provides an overview of the context in which the public/private partnerships are set, and it then moves on to examine four key factors that structure the key issues in public/private partnerships:

1. Preconditions for partnerships
2. Change dimensions that emerge as a result of partnerships
3. Mechanisms for partnering
4. Success indicators of partnerships
The Context

In conceptualising educational services it is useful to think of two dimensions - those who pay for education, ‘the payers,’ and those who provide education, ‘the providers’. Four types of organisation can carry out one or both of the payer/provider roles: governments, households, private for-profit companies and private not-for-profit organisations.

Two of these organisations have a history of playing both roles: governments can both pay for and provide education (a typical state school) as can households (a child who is educated at home or ‘home schooled’). Increasingly, all four types of organisations are playing one of the roles, payer or provider, and partnering with another type of organisation to play the other role. For example, the state as payer is joining with private non-profit providers and for-profit providers (e.g., academies in the UK and charter schools in the US) in order to provide education.

What is misleading, even incorrect, with the concept of privatisation in education is that it immediately calls up the image of privatisation in the industrial or commercial sector. In those sectors, for privatisation to take place it is normally assumed that one set of assets in the form of an organisation is sold to the private sector by the public sector and ownership passes between them. (Electricity, gas supply companies and telecoms during the period of the Thatcher government are the images of privatisation in the UK). This is not the pattern that is emerging in education. What is happening, instead, is that various partnerships are being established where the for-profit and the not-for-profit sectors are undertaking activities either for or with the public sector (local or national education authorities).

Contracting out (outsourcing), while technically correctly descriptive, is also an inadequate description of this process. Contracting out often assumes distance between the payer and the provider – one party contracts out entirely one product or activity to another party in an arm’s length, purely business-like manner. Based on data from our two case studies such characterisations are misleadingly sterile: we describe the payer-provider relationship, instead, as a ‘messy partnership’. By ‘messy’ we do not mean to convey concepts of disorganised, dysfunctional, chaotic or any other connotation that may be considered pejorative. Rather, our intent is to suggest that these partnerships are complex, multi-layered and, most significantly, evolving, i.e., much more than the simple, singular arm’s length relationships associated with formal inter-organisational contracting. Such a partnership exists when services are partly contracted to another party but with in-built links back into the paying organisation which bind the organisations across functional activities. The ‘out’ of outsourcing is inaccurate and misleading.

Because emerging relationships between education payers and providers have not yet been examined very deeply, we know more about what they are not than what they are. As a result, we researched six examples of partnerships to build a broad understanding of the field and then focused on two of them to build a more detailed analysis to try to better understand the phenomenon.
The two case studies in our research operate at two different levels or strands in the education system. One is focused on the not-for-profit private sector company 3Es and its partnership with Surrey LEA to turn around a failing school facing closure and replace it with a successful one. 3Es is a not-for-profit educational company that grew out of the success of Kingshurst City Technology College during the 1990s, and focuses on management contracts to establish new schools or improve existing schools. The second is a case study of Lincolnshire County Council which has entered into a 10-year contract with The Centre for British Teachers (CfBT) to run its school improvement service in partnership with the LEA. CfBT was established 30 years ago as a not-for-profit organisation that has provided educational services on a global basis. The aim of the former case (3Es) is to turn a failing school facing closure into a successful school; the aim of the latter case (CfBT) is to enhance the provision already existing by adding the resources of a new partner.

The first case study involved interviewing key personnel in the Surrey LEA regarding their motivation for seeking an external partner to turn around the failing school and to interview the key personnel in 3Es to understand their concept of the partnership and their role. These interviews were followed up by interviews and questionnaires in the case study school to assess both staff and pupils' perceptions of what the school had been like as an LEA school and what the differences were after it began operation as a 3Es school.

The second case study involved CfBT and Lincolnshire LEA. The purpose of this partnership was to improve the service to schools of the school improvement service of the LEA. Here we interviewed the CEO of Lincolnshire and the directors of CfBT as to their understanding of the purpose and nature of the partnership. Subsequently we interviewed officers and advisers working with schools as to their understanding of the change of focus and delivery as a CfBT organisation compared with being a solely LEA operation.

In structuring our analysis of the emerging pattern of relationships we have split this research into two parts. First, this paper draws on the research interviews and questionnaires from the school and LEA exemplars to provide an overview document. Second, additional reports will focus on detailed case analyses of the LEA and school examples.

These new partnerships are portrayed through four interdependent factors:

1. Preconditions for partnerships
2. Change dimensions that emerge as a result of partnerships
3. Partnering mechanisms
4. Success indicators of the partnerships

Preconditions are those attributes of the partnership that appeared to be required in order for the possibility of a partnership to exist. Change dimensions refer to the types of changes that appeared to be pursued through the partnership. Mechanisms for partnering describe the means or vehicles that bound the organisations to each other. Finally, success indicators are those products and by-products of the partnership that appear to provide value to the partnering relationship.
1. Preconditions for Partnerships

Partnerships do not happen frequently or randomly. They appear to occur only when certain preconditions exist. We had to ask ourselves and others “What was special about Surrey and Lincolnshire LEAs that caused people to create partnerships here and not in other LEAs?” In our analyses of the two partnerships, six interlocking preconditions surfaced as necessary in order for the partnership to be pursued in the first place.

1.1 A large, difficult but solvable problem

In both LEAs there was a widespread perception of a problem. In Surrey, the problem was a school that had received a ‘failing’ status designation from its inspection and subsequently was due for closure. In Lincolnshire, the problem was the LEA itself in that it was perceived by Ofsted that it could be performing at a higher level than had recently been the case. These problems are by no means unique to these LEAs, but they were perceived as sufficiently serious by the individuals whose responsibility it was to run and/or improve schooling. Furthermore, the problems were framed here as potentially solvable problems of organisational performance (school and LEA), not, for example, ‘unsolvable’ problems of funding cutbacks. Though potentially solvable, these problems were also seen as deep, enduring, complex and not necessarily amenable to familiar tactics for organisational improvement, eg internal reorganisation.

1.2 Creative thinking

This is a somewhat subjective assessment, but it relates to an aptitude to undertake novel and untested measures to address large and/or long-standing problems. It is reflected in the desire and ability of senior LEA managers to engage in strategic conversations with the wider education and non-education world to search out alternative strategies to address their problems. These searches led to the consideration of the concept of bringing in external partners. Although there appears to be little that stands in the way of an LEA’s outsourcing its school improvement functions (Lincolnshire) or whole school operation (Surrey), few had considered it before, and there was little collective experience with, or professional acceptance of, such a practice. Perhaps more than the other preconditions, this attribute describes the predisposition of individuals who were in positions of responsibility and authority to act as agents for their LEAs. It must include a way of thinking within the organisation that however good you are you can learn from other ways of doing things.

If educational operations are typically framed as a causal chain of: payer → provider → beneficiary, wherein the first stage sets the parameters for what is possible in the next stage and so on, then in these cases senior managers tended to think in reverse. By starting with a focus on the desired ends, they then sought to work backwards, beneficiary → provider → payer to address provider issues with more flexibility.
1.3 Aligned incentives

Closely related to the nature and difficulty of the problem was the alignment of incentives between LEA and companies which the LEA might partner. The LEA’s incentive was to solve an on-going problem that was tarnishing its organisational reputation locally. To achieve that, it also had to be perceived as acting urgently to address the problem. Finally, in addition to seeking to avoid the negative consequences associated with the problem, it also valued the prestige that might well accrue from solving the problem.

The incentives of the partner companies were different from those of the LEAs, but the two sets of incentives were aligned and reinforced each other. The companies sought a financially viable relationship from which they could derive suitable revenue from their services. In addition to earning revenue, the companies sought to grow their own capacity and capability through such an engagement with an LEA. Lessons and skills learned in this engagement could be applied in other partnerships or activities. Furthermore, these firms valued the perception of contributing to the public good through their services to a public education agency. Finally, such an engagement would better position the companies for further contracts in the education marketplace. This is linked strongly to the political environment in LEAs. Surrey had a culture whereby officers are encouraged to have new ideas and are trusted to come up with radical solutions. Old-style thinking would have lead to the closure of the Kings Manor School. Similarly Lincolnshire had a long experience of contracting out. This links strongly to the next point.

1.4 Willingness to pursue the tendering process

Ultimately it was the willingness of the LEAs to pursue the tendering process – despite the uncertainties, risks, negative reactions, etc – that led to the partnerships we studied. Several factors contributed to this willingness. Both LEAs were embedded in county councils with a favourable predisposition to the concept of engaging external partners for public work. (This is not necessarily the case with all, or even most, other local authorities.) In both instances and with some of the individual personnel involved, there was a history of personal experience with partnerships. These factors contributed to the willingness to commit scarce resources to the process, and in so doing, invest in a relatively uncertain venture. Like the other preconditions, willingness was necessary, but not sufficient.

1.5 Ability to attract and then negotiate with prospective partners

As with the precondition of entrepreneurial thinking, this ability was largely an individual characteristic of the people who were responsible for leading the tendering process, especially in attracting organisations with appropriate interests and capabilities, and then negotiating with them. Technical competencies complemented persuasive capabilities, ranging all the way from framing the problem as professional services to be performed, to designing working relationships between existing LEA (and school) educators and educational specialists currently employed by the organisations, to attracting interest and then securing viable bids of sufficient quantity and quality, to awarding the contract or service agreement, to reconfiguring operations to accommodate working in an inter-organisational partnership. These tasks demanded a certain level of technical sophistication and skills among the key individuals, without which the process had much less chance of going forward.
1.6 Capacity to undertake partnerships

Although a partnership can ultimately contribute to the overall capacity of an organisation by adding expertise, knowledge and experience that otherwise would be unavailable to it, it is also the case that the organisations have to possess a certain level of capacity and capability to consider, pursue and then enter a partnership. It is a large and complex process that is not funded, and only organisations with some degree of excess capacity and sufficient capability can divert resources (human and otherwise) into the process.

Perhaps the most valuable of these resources is the time, attention and capability of senior managers. In order for any complex service to be considered for tendering, it must first be understood, measured and monitored at some minimum level. For example, if the true costs of various internally provided services are not known, it is extraordinarily difficult for both parties to determine the value to themselves of any tendering proposal.

The presence of these preconditions increased the feasibility of partnering, but they are separate and distinct from the nature and content of the resulting partnerships.
2. Change Dimensions that Emerge as a Result of Partnerships

It is difficult to solve problems without at the same time framing them as required changes. The match between ‘problems’ and ‘changes’ is not always obvious. Poor performance in a school and ambitions for improved performance in an LEA both require action. The very act of seeking partners in this environment required that at some time during the pursuit of partners, problems had to be framed as specific changes that were required. (The underlying presumption – that certain changes were feasible and reasonable ways to address the problem – had to be shared, at least in general terms by the LEA and the partner firm). We discuss below the major changes that are being addressed by the partnerships, rather than the more abstract problems with which the changes are associated.

2.1 Enhance the capacity and capability of senior LEA or school staff

A certain capability on the part of senior LEA staff was both a precondition and a change requirement. The capability required to initiate and create the partnership had to be supplemented with added capability to implement and operate productively within the partnership. In both cases, the very act of undertaking the relatively complex and heretofore untried task of tendering these services both taxed LEA capabilities, but also provided a form of on-the-job training for LEA senior staff. Indeed, the process of interacting with competing organisations, while time consuming, enabled LEA staff to sharpen priorities and to develop penetrating analyses of their LEAs as well as the capabilities and competing proposals of the organisations under consideration. The nature of that added capability differed between the two detailed cases – one focusing on LEA operations and the other focusing on operations in a secondary school. In both cases the tendering process itself contributed to the necessary development of senior LEA staff.

2.2 Change the staff or the mind set of the existing staff

Some of the problems required actual changes in staff. These changes were a central part of the Surrey story (from Kings Manor to Kings College), and to a much lesser degree in the Lincolnshire story. In Kings Manor there was a major attempt to staff the new school with staff that were committed to radical change and within normal LEA procedures there was a significant change in teaching staff. The previously declining school had been reduced to 20 full-time staff and six part-time staff, with one-third on long-term supply or temporary contracts. In the end, seven of the full-time staff were transferred to the new school. Staff changes of this magnitude represent a dramatic and quick way to change the skills, attitudes and culture in an organisation. Later on in the school’s development, Kings Manor had a ‘Fresh Start’ designation, which provided an increment of added financial resources. However this was not available at the time of radical staff and other changes. In contrast to staff changes in Surrey, only one staff member was changed in Lincolnshire (Head of the School Improvement Unit) and that was an addition.

The depth and severity of the Surrey problem was associated with a major staff turnover, and the relatively less severe problem in Lincolnshire was associated with a single key staff change. In a failing organisation it may be necessary to replace high proportions of staff because there is not enough residual capacity and capability to transform its culture; whereas, in a ‘merely’ underperforming organisation, a large degree of untapped capability in the organisation may still be available, requiring only a small number of key staff changes to be sufficient.
2.3 Change the perception that no significant change was likely to take place

One of the recurring problems, which was shared by LEA staff, school staff and parents, was the initial scepticism that the large problems were likely to be solved. The problems had been in existence for a considerable period of time and had not been solved despite previous attempts. There was little justification for thinking that the problems would be successfully addressed this time or, initially, that a partnership could be a vehicle for solving them. Yet, the very act of undertaking the tendering process itself helped to change some of this scepticism.

2.4 Raise expectations of ‘acceptable practices’

Closely related to the prior perception of ‘this time we’re serious’ was the need to change the perception of ‘acceptable practice.’ This change focuses more directly on the widely accepted, routine ways of operating the school (Surrey) or the LEA office (Lincolnshire). In changing and upgrading the definition of ‘acceptable’ the large messy problem was ultimately seen to be those current practices which had been acceptable, but now no longer were.

One example of previously acceptable practices in the Lincolnshire case involved the LEA’s staff development services to schools. Schools had been passive recipients of free staff development services. In part because these services (presentations to school staff by LEA experts) were ‘given’ to schools, the LEA did not feel obliged to systematically evaluate individual presentations and by similar logic, school staff did not feel they were in a position to voice opinions about variations in the quality of the services they were given, even though their informal evaluations of individual presentations varied enormously. This hitherto acceptable practice had been going on for years and could have continued except for a growing conviction that what had once been acceptable was now no longer good enough. Today, similar services are no longer free; the LEA has to ‘sell’ its services to schools and systematically gathers client satisfaction data on the services it provides. This example illustrates both the upward redefinition of ‘acceptable’ and its intimate association with concrete changes in practices and services.

2.5 Change schooling practices and services

Ultimately, the messy problem begins to be tackled only when standard operating procedures change. Although the services provided by the LEA are inherently different in kind from instructional practices in a secondary school, improvement in both settings could occur (but not, of course, be guaranteed) only with changes in what each organisation typically did.

In Lincolnshire, for example, the standard reviews of a school’s key performance indicators became more consequential for both schools and the LEA as this was part of the contract delivery terms. In a similar vein, schools gained greater input into resource allocation decisions for school improvement and, as a consequence, began to factor prices into decisions about the resources that had previously been free but often scarce or of less than appropriate quality.

Among changes at the school level in Surrey, the internal organisation of the school had moved to a flat structure distributing responsibilities more broadly among teaching staff than had been the case. Communication, instructional management and record-keeping functions were rebuilt as an integrated, web-, voice- and paper-based system, and the school’s cyber-cafe, feeding independent learning and having a socialising function, was reconfigured.

In both cases individual changes in standard operating procedures, ethos and culture were discernable changes in behaviours, each contributing to and reinforcing attitudinal changes.
3. Mechanisms for Partnering

The partnerships are held together through a variety of mechanisms, formal as well as informal. Organisations can use their own structures and operate through their own internal hierarchical structures or they can contract out to the market. Partnerships described here have elements both of hierarchies and markets as well as unique features. Consequently, partnerships are more accurately described as a third form of organisational activity. This is illustrated in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: Dimensions of Markets, Hierarchies & Partnerships.

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<th>Markets</th>
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<td>Haggling</td>
<td>Supervised</td>
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<tr>
<td>Degree of flexibility</td>
<td>High</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of commitment</td>
<td>Low</td>
<td>Medium/High</td>
<td>Medium/High</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tone or climate</td>
<td>Precision, Suspicion</td>
<td>Formal, bureaucratic</td>
<td>Open - Mutual benefit</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parties’ choices</td>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Dependent</td>
<td>Interdependent</td>
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Three types of mechanisms bind the partnership organisations:

- written agreements in the form of service agreements or contracts
- staffing relationships
- decision-making procedures

All three reflect both the unique features of partnerships as well as the features that are also found in hierarchical or market relationships. Both of our two case studies revealed examples of all three of the mechanisms described below.

3.1 Formalising the partnership through service agreements or contracts

Underlying the partnerships is at least one written, complex and detailed formal agreement stipulating the terms and conditions of the partnering agreement, including assignment of responsibilities, authorities, parameters, deliverables, rewards and consequences of non-performance. These highly formal, legalistic documents represent a form of transition from the early stages of tendering, firm solicitation and negotiation to the initiation and operation of the partnership. As such, they are detailed, constructed with an eye toward legal defensibility, and include a large number of possible, but not necessarily likely, contingencies. Partly in reflection of the nature of these agreements, the Lincolnshire/CfBT contract ran to 937 pages.
Given what both parties have learned about each other and about this form of contracting, it is likely that they would probably construct a much shorter agreement were they to undertake the task today, which suggests their transitional utility. Sometime after Lincolnshire and CfBT established their agreement, CfBT negotiated a similar one with East Sussex. As a result of the experience gained in Lincolnshire, this contract is little over 100 pages. These formal contracts are transitional in the sense that after they are created, they are seldom referenced. (These formal agreements would be likely to come back into play only if working relationships had broken down and the partners had to resort to legal means to seek remedies.)

3.2 Staffing the partnership through cross-seconding of staff and employment specifications

The nature of the partnership is reflected in the way it (not just the individual partnering organisations) is staffed, and it is here where our benign connotation of ‘messy’ is most in evidence. For example, the partnership in Surrey was staffed primarily through the school governing body. The school was created as a voluntary aided school (even though it had no faith affiliation) and 3Es took the role of foundation governors. The school principal was recruited by 3Es, appointed by the school governors and paid by the governors from funds provided by the LEA. The principal reported to the school governing body and not directly to the senior management of 3Es, even though 3Es had contracted to operate the school. However, 3Es has an ongoing responsibility to monitor and intervene in the management of the school if necessary under its contract with Surrey LEA.

Similarly in Lincolnshire, the lead project manager for CfBT took on the title of Lincolnshire’s Head of School Improvement. The way he carries out CfBT’s school improvement contract is through the LEA’s four principal school inspectors, LEA employees who, while technically reporting to him, are ultimately accountable to the LEA director. (There is one other inspector without a specific portfolio of schools, who reports to him as well. He was an LEA employee and is now a CfBT employee.)

In both cases the partnership isstaffed in a manner that might appear blurred and/or messy if viewed only from the perspective of one or the other of the partner organisations. From the perspective of the partnership, however, a certain degree of intentional line-crossing is both necessary and desirable as a means of carrying out the obligations and promises of joint work. (This does not rule out, however, the possibility of dysfunctional staffing of partnerships any more than dysfunctional staffing can be ruled out in any other organised activity.)

3.3 Operating the partnership through decision-making procedures

The nature of the partnership is reflected in how the partnership, as well as the individual partnering organisations, is operated. How are decisions made which affect the partnership? How is performance monitored and accountability assured?

In both cases the primary focus of operation is the client organisation (school in Surrey and LEA in Lincolnshire), with the partnership and the firm playing critical but supporting roles. The decision-making and procedural routines in Surrey are not unlike those that one would expect in a typical secondary school, and similarly for Lincolnshire in a typical LEA. It is primarily at selected points of change and/or challenges facing the client organisation where the distinct impact of the partnership is felt.
‘Success’ is a relative term, meant here to suggest that in the two case studies it appears that to date the key actors involved implicitly believe (and at times have explicitly stated) that the benefits associated with the partnership outweigh the costs. The nature of these benefits is still very formative and fluid and could change in the future, but they seem to cluster around five overlapping themes.

4.1 Increased focus on core tasks

By defining the nature of the activities to be covered in the contract and by assessing the partner on those activities two benefits emerge. First, there is a fundamental reassessment of the key or core tasks to be undertaken leading to greater focus. Second, the ability to reject political and other interference which seeks to widen the range of activities can more successfully be resisted as these activities lie outside the contracted activities. In both the school and LEA setting greater clarity of purpose and less interference with getting on with the job was reported.

4.2 Enhanced service quality through enhanced human capital

At the LEA, and school level, partners had undertaken research to verify measures of improved service quality. In the school setting the participants reported the ability to attract high quality people and the unique ability to change radically the existing workforce. In the LEA setting, the enhancement in human capital was seen as a response to new leadership and to greater involvement and commitment by existing staff to a new sense of purpose and focus. There had been no change in existing staff.

4.3 Improved performance on outcomes - both processes and products

At the school level, extensive research with pupils, parents and teachers reported improved learning outcomes as measured by KS3 and GCSE results and improved learning processes as reported by attitude surveys and interview data. At the LEA level, interviews with a cross section of staff reported improved working processes and relationships with schools. Service delivery data were being completed and analysed, and to date show improvement.

4.4 Proactive leadership style

The act of entering into, and then operating within, the partnership was both a reflection of, and a contribution to, a sense that the leadership of the organisation was willing and able to take on large, complex problems in the organisation. Indeed moving to this sort of partnership in itself requires a proactive leadership style.

4.5 Increasingly entrepreneurial culture and attitude reflected in behaviour

The combined effects of the first four themes appear to cascade over the involved parties providing a greater sense of empowerment and fostering a more entrepreneurial culture. Individuals were more willing to reconsider possible improvements in accepted practices and to ask ‘Why not?’ The partners were encouraged to be creative in the way they approached contractual and other possibilities for work.
The implications of this study for education service leaders are tentative and conditional for a number of reasons. First, high quality, innovative leadership skills seem to be disproportionately in evidence in creating and operating these kinds of partnerships. Second, the situations and circumstances surrounding these case studies were important ingredients contributing to the decisions to enter into partnerships for school improvement, and it is not obvious how widespread a critical mass of these necessary conditions exists in wider educational contexts. Third, the case studies may be atypical. Private involvement in one school may have significant impact but whether the specific factors that make an individual school successful can be replicated over a large number of schools is more problematic. Similarly, private sector involvement in LEAs has focused on part of the service delivery in a limited number of LEAs. Other areas of service delivery may present unforeseen challenges not revealed by these studies. Finally, the problem of capacity is of major significance in determining whether the quality of support for extending this activity is possible. It is not yet clear what percentage of educational organisations have the capacity to seriously consider public/private partnerships.
Our preliminary research suggests that, under certain circumstances public/private partnerships may offer a number of potential benefits for the education service. Does combining two different sets of organisational skills and human capital have the potential to yield better outcomes than would have been possible with a single set of organisational skills and capital? Our research, given the note of caution, would suggest that enhanced provision is indeed possible. However, for that to be the case, the lessons learnt regarding the preconditions for partnering, the change dimensions involved in partnering and the mechanisms for partnering have to be given serious attention if success is to be achieved in these new partnership ventures.
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