CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Design

The purpose of this study was to collect data on the current status of school/business collaborative activities in the Commonwealth of Virginia and to compare that data to a baseline study conducted by Larkin C. Phillips during the 1990-91 school year. This study used the same questions that were used by Phillips and was designed to provide the following information:

(1) common characteristics of school divisions in Virginia that conducted collaborative activities during the 1998-99 school year as compared to the 1990-1991 school year;

(2) the types of collaborative activities conducted in Virginia during the 1998-99 school years as compared to the 1990-1991 school year;

(3) current resources used to manage collaborative activities as compared to the 1990-91 school year; and

(4) types of business that participated in collaborative activities in 1998-99 as compared to the 1990-91 school year (Phillips, 1992, p48).

The specific research questions measured by the survey were identical to those used by Phillips in his study of school-business collaborative relationships in the Commonwealth of Virginia:

a. What percent of school divisions in Virginia had one or more school/business collaborative activities during the 1998-99 school year?
b. What percent of school/business collaborative activities in Virginia were located in rural, city, or suburban school divisions?

c. What were the number and the percent of school divisions in Virginia that could be classified as small, average, large, or very large, based on student enrollment K-12, with collaborative activities?

d. What was the number and percent of school divisions in Virginia with collaborative activities that could be placed into each of four levels of school division wealth based on composite index ranking between .2000 and .4000, between .4001 and .6001, between .6001 and .8000, and between .8001 and 1.000?

e. In Virginia, what school/business collaborative activities were found in elementary schools, in middle/junior high schools, and in high schools?

f. In Virginia, what percent of the elementary schools, middle/junior high schools, and high schools conducted school/business collaborative activities during the 1998-99 school year.

g. How did school administrators in Virginia rate each school division’s total collaborative program based on six identified standards?

h. What specific collaborative activities did school administrators in Virginia feel are outstanding or innovative?

i. What are the number and the percent of school divisions in Virginia that had established business/community educational foundations?

j. What were the primary functions of business/community educational foundations in Virginia?
k. What were the number and the percent of school divisions in Virginia that used one of the following three management techniques to develop and coordinate school/business collaborative activities?

   (A) one person assumed responsibility for all collaborative activities in the division;
   (B) the individual school assumed total responsibility for activities within the school;
   (C) the individual school managed collaborative activities with assistance from a division coordinator/supervisor.

l. What person(s) in the school division or in the community most often initiated collaborative activities during the 1998-1999 school year?

m. Using the U. S. Department of Commerce classification system, what types of businesses in Virginia most often developed collaborative activities with local school divisions in Virginia?

n. What services did school divisions in Virginia provide to businesses as a part of collaborative activities (Phillips, 1992 p.49)?

Information from the survey was used to determine what relationship if any existed between school division type, school division size, school division wealth and the school division conducting school/business collaborative activities. The school divisions’ characteristics were examined to determine any indication of a school division’s probability of conducting collaborative activities. These
characteristics were compared to the findings in the Phillips study, to determine if there were any significant differences.

The types of collaborative activities conducted by school divisions in Virginia were investigated by the survey. School personnel responding to the survey were asked questions about twelve types of collaborative activities, which were identified in the Phillips study, and which were commonly identified in literature as usual types of collaborative activities. In addition, they were asked to list any additional collaborative activities that schools participated in during the time period. The survey also asked the respondent to identify the level (elementary, middle/junior high or high school) at which the collaborative activity was conducted. Once again, these answers were compared to the findings of the Phillips study.

Another question asked about the purposes of educational foundations that businesses participated in with schools. Additionally, the survey requests the respondent to describe a collaborative activity that he feels is especially rewarding or beneficial to the school or division. This question was designed to provide information on the school/or schools involved, program objectives, general description of the program, and specific outcomes of the activity. The number of business firms who worked with the schools was identified by responses on question 11. As with the previous questions these were compared to the findings of the Phillips study to determine if significant changes had occurred from the beginning of the decade to the end.
Questions 12-15 were designed to solicit information regarding management techniques used by school divisions. The questions addressed who manages collaborative activities in the school division, who initiated collaborative activities, what if any community umbrella organizations manage collaborative activities in the schools, and the availability of written policies regulating collaborative activities.

Services provided to businesses by school divisions in exchange for business services or resources was asked about in another question. The final question asked about evaluation procedures used to assess school/business collaborative activities. This question asked respondents to rank five areas of school/business collaborative activities on a scale of 1-4 with 1 being a strong feature of the program, and 4 being not an important part of the program. Once again, the responses to these questions were analyzed to determine if any significant differences are identified from the Phillips study.

**Population**

The population for the study was all 131 school divisions in the Commonwealth of Virginia (list provided by the Virginia Department of Education). The survey was sent to the division superintendent and requested him/her to identify the person who was most familiar with school/business collaborative activities in the school system and to have that person complete the questionnaire. “Sampling techniques were not needed because the total population in the Commonwealth was surveyed” (Phillips 1992, p. 52). Non-respondents were not factored into the survey results in anyway.
The Instrument

The survey instrument used the same questions that were used in the Phillips study in 1992, however the format was changed to allow for scanning the results. Using the same questions was essential to being able to draw comparisons between the two studies, thus being able to determine significant differences between the studies.

This researcher did not validate the survey instrument since Phillips had previously validated it in the 1992 study. Phillips pilot tested the survey instrument by using a sample of five persons in local school divisions and the State Department of Education who were familiar with collaborative activities, but would not be participating in the survey. In his validation procedure he searched for (a) misinterpretations; (b) ambiguities; (c) additional information that should be obtained; (d) awkwardness regarding the physical form of the instrument and (e) the amount of time required to complete the questionnaire (Phillips 1992).

Procedure

The survey instrument was sent to all 131-school superintendents in the Commonwealth with a cover letter explaining the purpose and importance of the survey. A self-addressed, stamped envelope was provided for mailing back the survey. School divisions that did not respond after 21 days were sent reminder letters requesting that they respond. After 30 days if the division had not responded a second cover letter and survey were sent requesting their responses.
Data Analysis

Phillips used descriptive statistics to analyze the data pursuant to the following: (1) to describe school/business collaborative activities that occurred in Virginia; (2) to report the presence of collaborative activities by school division characteristics; and (3) to determine resources that school divisions use to manage collaborative activities (Phillips 1992, p.54). Additionally a further analysis was conducted to compare the current findings to the Phillips study to determine where significant differences occur in percentages between the Phillips study and the current study. Phillips provided percentages for all responses in his study and the same thing was provided in this study. The percentages in the Phillips study were subtracted from the current study providing for a positive or negative change in percentage. All changes were recorded and used to describe significant changes as determined by the researcher. The findings will show a comparison of the 1990-91 results versus the 1998-99 results.

Limitations

Data can only show what happened during the 1998-1999 school year as compared to the 1990-1991 school year. The data can not measure what happened in the interim. Accuracy of the results depends on the accuracy of returned survey instruments and the number of instruments returned. These data cannot be used to predict collaborative arrangements in other populations.

School divisions were asked to self classify according to the following categories: city, rural and suburban. The survey does not allow for a way of
checking if school divisions have changed categories since the 1991 study. In addition, there is no way to disaggregate those divisions that changed categories based on size or composite index from the previous study.