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# Bursar Development Programme **Final Evaluation Report** 2003–2007

Nigel Wright  
Professor Derek Colquhoun  
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The Bursar Development Programme (BDP) was established at the request of the then Secretary of State for Education and Skills, Estelle Morris. In 2002 NCSL was tasked with responsibility to train at least 1,000 existing and new bursars or school business managers (SBMs) by 2006, and in response developed two courses.

The entry-level Certificate of School Business Management (CSBM) course was established first, followed by the Diploma of School Business Management (DSBM) course, the latter set up to train SBMs to operate at a senior, strategic level within their schools. Both courses employ an innovative blended-learning approach, combining face-to-face teaching with integrated online learning. Both take the form of three two-day sessions in a residential, face-to-face format, and require the submission of rigorously assessed assignments.

This report presents an evaluation of the nationally rolled-out CSBM course, the DSBM pilot course and the subsequent nationally rolled-out DSBM course, and the impacts of both courses on participants and their schools. The evaluation methodology employed principles of realistic evaluation and used both quantitative and qualitative methods of data collection.

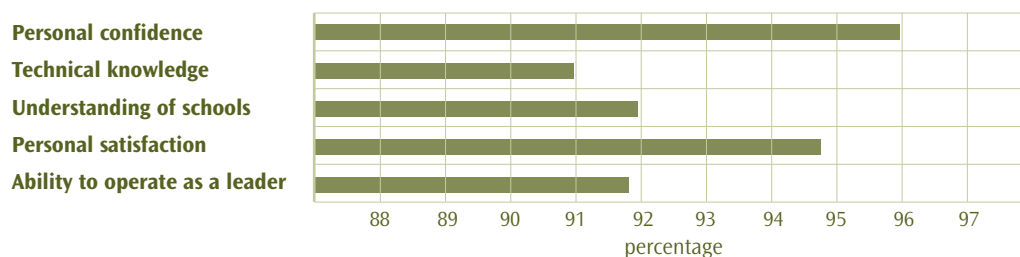
## CSBM findings

CSBM has proved a very successful course, providing a clear opportunity for candidates to enhance their leadership, administrative and managerial capacities in an educational setting. It has laid the foundation for future development in the school business management profession.

The most striking outcome of CSBM has been the extent of leadership development among school business managers.

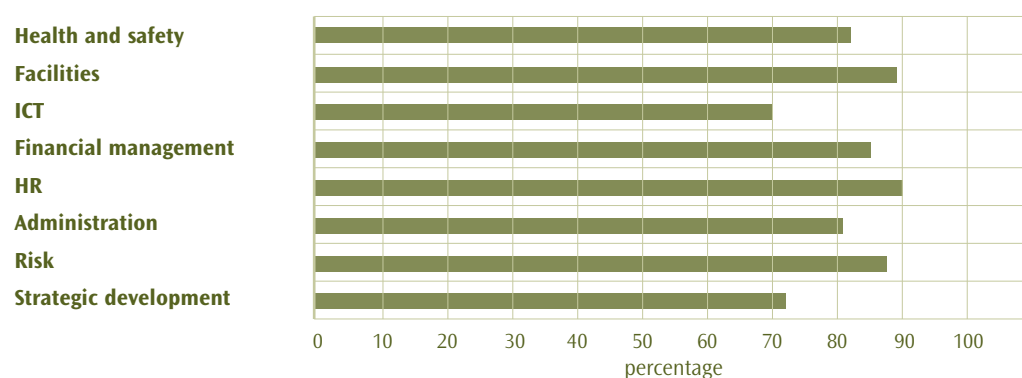
At the level of the individual SBM, the impact has been impressive. Ratings given by a random sample of 283 CSBM course participants on the impact of the programme on five areas of personal development are summarised in figure 1.

**Figure 1: CSBM graduates' ratings of course outcomes**



In terms of self-reported impact in their schools, responses from SBMs were very encouraging, as demonstrated in figure 2.

**Figure 2: CSBM graduates' self-reported impact in schools**

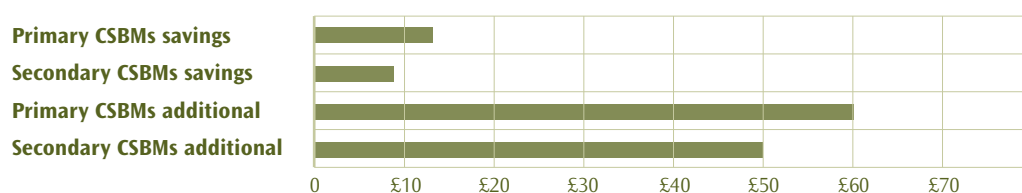


As a result of the course, SBMs reported significant changes in how they use their time. They indicated a substantial reduction in time spent on routine administration, with that resource devoted to leadership and management activities.

In addition, the CSBM course has provided a significant opportunity for SBMs to develop networks.

SBMs reported achieving savings and attracting additional funding, as shown on a per-pupil basis in figure 3.

**Figure 3: CSBM SBMs' average per-pupil savings and additional funding**



In-depth interviews in the form of professional conversations with a sample of SBMs confirmed the high esteem in which they held the course and the value they placed upon the course, the materials and the tutoring. A particular advantage mentioned by SBMs in primary schools was that the course is free of charge to schools in the maintained sector.

SBMs perceived that their relationship with their headteachers was the crucial factor in the development of their role and in enabling them to have an impact in schools.

## DSBM findings

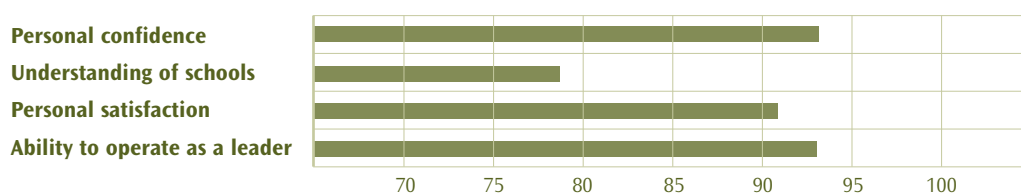
Following an extensive DSBM pilot, the course was successfully rolled out nationally. This strategic-level course has helped SBMs to function as members of their school's senior management or leadership team. In addition it has contributed to their professional development.

The course has provided a framework within which SBMs can progress. Many have progressed from CSBM to DSBM and some have continued on to Manchester Metropolitan University's BA degree programme in school business management. Some senior school business managers, graduates of DSBM, are now sending their subordinate team leaders on CSBM courses.

After completing the three DSBM modules, graduates surveyed reported increased understanding of the subject matter and increased impact in their schools as a result of the course – over three-quarters of them in the case of the strategic management module, 72 per cent for the school improvement module and 83 per cent for the change management module. Furthermore, 89 per cent indicated that their role had changed as a result of the course, and 77 per cent were now full members of their senior management team. DSBM graduates reported an increase in the time they spent on leadership activities and a reduction in time spent on administration. These factors point to a significant and developing role and one which will continue to have an impact in schools.

SBMs reported very strongly on four aspects of personal impact the course had on them, as shown in figure 4. Candidate course satisfaction was very high.

**Figure 4: DSBM graduates' ratings of course outcomes**



SBMs perceived that the relationship with their headteacher was the crucial factor in the development of their role and their impact in school. The attitude of the local authority was also a factor.

## Other findings

Responses from a small sample of headteachers clearly confirmed strong support for these courses; some expressed incredulity at the thought of a school without a business manager. Not all heads of the interviewed SBMs were available for interview; in some cases SBMs indicated that the relationship with their heads was difficult.

This underlined the crucial role of the SBM–headteacher relationship. For the wider development of SBMs, some headteachers still need to be convinced of the worth of the courses and their graduates, as do some local authorities.

## Recommendations

Some DSBM graduates have suggested the need for higher-level recognition, and possibly further training leading to a consultant school business manager role. We believe that this is particularly relevant for SBMs who are working in consortia, federations or extended schools where organisational management is, on the face of it, much more complex.

It is critical that course development work continues to ensure that content is relevant to the needs of schools and their SBMs. For example, since DSBM was established, extended schools, Every Child Matters, school meals, academies and Building Schools for the Future have become central parts of the school agenda.

Leadership of school support staff is a responsibility of many SBMs. We believe that this should form part of future revisions to DSBM.

There is clear and substantial evidence that the BDP is having significant impact in schools. NCSL should be congratulated on the approach adopted in developing these programmes and on their successful delivery.