

www.ncsl.org.uk

Inspiring leaders;
improving children's lives

5

Section 5 **DSBM** findings



5.1 **Introduction**

This chapter presents the principal findings from our DSBM evaluation. There are five sections to this chapter:

1. Rationale for the DSBM course
2. DSBM aims and objectives
3. DSBM evaluation approach
4. Evaluation of the DSBM pilots
5. Evaluation of the rolled-out DSBM course

5.2 **Rationale for the DSBM course**

Following the establishment of the CSBM course in 2002, DfES invited NCSL to develop a higher-level course to which successful CSBM graduates might progress to develop key leadership and strategic competences. A major part of our early activity included evaluation of the pilot of this DSBM course. The University of Lincoln designed the pilot course, delivered the residential teaching sessions and handled course assessment. Another contractor, KnowledgePool, developed the online elements of the course.

The key rationale for the DSBM course was to provide participants with the skills and competences to play a full strategic and leadership role in their schools and operate effectively in their SMTs.

Important questions early on in our evaluation of the pilot course were as follows.

- Is there a market demand for the DSBM course?
- How was the pilot course received by SBMs?
- Could the course be rolled out nationally?
- Did the course provide a strategic level of input, challenge and outcome?

5.3 **DSBM aims and objectives**

The aims of the DSBM course as stated in the *Facilitator and Tutor Manual* (NCSL, undated) are:

- developing people
- improving organisation
- enhancing the profession

The course's specific aims are to provide:

- a framework to facilitate the development of strategic skills that will enable candidates to contribute to organisational effectiveness
- opportunities to negotiate tasks and areas of experience to meet individual and organisational development needs
- opportunities for reflective debate and for interface between school business management and teaching and learning
- opportunities to develop networks to support effective delivery in the workplace
- opportunities to foster national and international understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the SBM

The objectives of the course may be inferred from the learning outcomes stated in the same publication. Upon successful completion of the course, candidates should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- understand the complex, dynamic organisational environment in which senior managers and leaders work
- articulate the strategic significance for site-based management of recent and continuing government reforms
- identify and evaluate emerging trends in institutional management
- demonstrate self-management skills and the ability to work with others to develop an appropriate process for managing institutional change
- demonstrate an understanding of the issue of quality management as a central feature of institutional improvement
- demonstrate an understanding of strategic leadership

5.4 **DSBM evaluation approach**

Our approach to the DSBM evaluation had two stages. First we set out to evaluate the DSBM pilot course with a view to advising on its content and the feasibility of rolling it out nationally; second, contingent upon a positive outcome to the first stage, to provide an evaluation of the DSBM course in its rolled-out form. Our initial work therefore centred on the questions stated in section 5.2 above.

We addressed these questions by attending the pilot residential sessions, held at NCSL. For pilot cohort 1a we observed the second day of the second session and the full third session. For pilot cohort 1b we observed all three full sessions. We have therefore seen an example of each of the sessions which comprise the taught part of the course. In all, this has involved observing and discussing the course with close to 100 candidates. We sat in on all full-group sessions.

We observed tutor-group activities using a system in which one evaluator worked almost entirely with the same candidate group for the duration of the session while the other moved between groups. This provided us with opportunities to see how a single group tackled a task from inception to completion while the other member was able to see how different groups gelled and set about the same task, thus giving us a wider picture of how SBMs were responding to the various aspects of the course.

In addition to our observations, we used three questionnaires with the pilot cohorts. The first, with cohort 1b, focused on initial reactions to the session's first day. Another questionnaire was used with both cohorts after their second session. A third was devised after cohort 1a had completed their third session. This was administered by email, with a poor response. This questionnaire was used with pilot cohort 1b at their residential session and we received a good response. We held five focus-group interviews with SBMs during residential sessions.

In addition, we have attended a number of other meetings about the development of the pilot DSBM course: with contractors at NCSL, with project staff during residential sessions and with tutors and course designers. A member of the evaluation team attended the DSBM pilot course debriefing meeting held at NCSL at the beginning of July 2004.

5.5 Evaluation of the DSBM pilot course

5.5.1 Introduction

The development of the DSBM course for the pilot cohorts provided a very interesting evaluation challenge in that we were often observing sessions for which the materials had only been written a short while before. This is not a criticism of those involved but an observation on the process of developing a major course in a very tight time-frame. In such a pilot, it would not be surprising to find that there were problems that arose, materials that were not quite clear and arrangements, particularly about assessment, that needed adjustment or clarification as the pilot cohorts proceeded. The programme team tackled the issues in positive ways and drove the development of the course forwards. To aid the reader, such changes as were made to the pilot course following advice have been noted in this section in ***bold italics***. Many of these issues were also relevant to the likely roll-out of the DSBM course after the pilot courses. Therefore the issues arising from such a pilot and their resolution were of considerable importance for the proposed national roll-out.

5.5.2 DSBM pilot course

Residential sessions

The residential sessions on the pilot course varied in that for most of the course, students were working largely on self-directed tasks in tutor groups or tutor subgroups. There were some large-group teaching sessions. Some of these did raise issues for the national roll-out in that the expertise which had been brought in, eg in the form of guest speakers such as key NCSL staff or head teachers local to NCSL, might not be readily available in other locations when the course was rolled out. Some sessions seemed unnecessarily long, dealing with administrative issues which could have been sorted out by the tutor team beforehand and simply published for the candidates. This seemed to be particularly so in relation to matters on assessment which were only stipulated at the time of the last session.

Tasks

At the first meeting, some of the explanatory tasks about talk2learn were not clearly explained. For candidates who had not undertaken the CSBM course, this could be a problem. ***This issue has been dealt with in the rolled-out course and more specifically for candidates who are external to schools.*** At the first session, many candidates told us that they thought the session should have taken two days rather than one. Their reasons included the view that it would have allowed them longer to establish networks between themselves, to gain in confidence and to get a clearer idea of what the course was about. As it was, the first day dealt almost entirely with administrative matters, e-learning, talk2learn, assessment and a module on writing (which seemed unduly dull). On this first day, SBMs were not able establish socially professional networks (characteristic of CSBM), or engage with school business management issues or matters of school leadership and management. As such, the substantive parts of the course were not really opened up at all as a means of whetting SBMs' appetites for the course. ***In the rolled-out course, NCSL has accepted advice and the course has been extended to run over three, two-day sessions.***

At the second session, the executive challenge exercise on the extended school provoked some very positive work from the SBMs. Their ability to collaborate and bring their collective experience to bear upon the set task was good. There are two important issues here – one relates to internet research and the other to making the most effective use of the time available for the work.

The internet research aspect was devised without considering the practicalities of what might be available in hotel or conference venues if the course were rolled out. In particular, this activity involved SBMs in research work. This was possible at NCSL but, in virtually all of the hotel venues we have seen used for the CSBM course, this would create considerable difficulty. Yet this should not prove insurmountable: candidates could be advised of the nature of the task in advance and instructed to download relevant materials to disk or CD before the session.

They could then work from these at the course venue. ***This has been dealt with in a number of ways: many venues are better equipped than those we saw early in 2004, the course materials have been redrafted, candidates are expected to download more materials prior to the residential sessions and the task has been significantly modified. In these respects the issues we noted during the pilot have been addressed.*** The only possible loss here is that the open-ended nature of the executive challenge element has been modified.

It was apparent during the second session of the second pilot course that candidates were unclear about the requirements for their presentation. Several indicated that as consultants presenting to the governors of Mill Stream School, they would not be reporting about how they examined and developed their team (the second requirement of the presentation).

At the third session, the first day's activity seemed very pertinent for SBMs, who are seeking a more strategic view of their schools. The performance and assessment (PANDA) reports and Ofsted data were very appropriate and made for a challenging and informative task. Participation in this seemed to go well, though some had never seen a PANDA and others didn't know how to use the data it provided. The learning that arose from this was valuable. With the presentation completed by mid-morning on the second day, however, the remainder of this day seemed a little anticlimactic, given over to more administrative issues such as assessment, and professional development issues, many of which had been well aired during informal sessions by SBMs anyway. With more focused input from tutors, this task could have been completed by the end of the first day. A key area which SBMs were not asked to engage with was strategic financial planning. This could have provided an important and final activity to draw together all of the earlier strands of the course. We feel that with some careful fine-tuning, the structures of the second and third sessions could be significantly enhanced. ***Since the pilot, strategic financial planning has been introduced and the two modules reframed so that one deals with school improvement and the other with strategic management.*** It should also be noted that since the pilot, the Ofsted framework has been substantially altered.

The question of session length was raised by some. The course designers were of the view that this was meant to be a challenging course and that if the participants needed to work late finishing a group task then this would not be too dissimilar from what they might encounter in real school life at a senior level. The idea that the course simulated the need to work in teams and in constricted time-frames, and had an element of surprise, were all plausible. We would make the observation here that some groups were at the point where the 'surprise' information was needed earlier than the tutor was prepared to release it. This seemed to be a little restrictive. Having heard, at the end of the course, a reasoned explanation for the rationale for its basic design, our view is that this was substantially achieved.

Six days rather than five?

We found evidence from participants, tutors and the designers that a six-day course would enhance the course very considerably. Candidates, particularly those who did not first do the CSBM, expressed the view that the induction needed more time to enable them to familiarise themselves with:

- talk2learn
- course construction
- course expectations

Tutors commented that candidates needed more time to gel as a group, and that this would lead to greater use of talk2learn. Tutors observed that only towards the end of the course were students making use of talk2learn; in their view, this contrasted with their experience of talk2learn with CSBM. ***In the rolled-out course, the number of days has been increased from five to six, providing for three sessions of two days each.***

Preparatory work

Views on this were mixed. The programme team and the tutors felt that the course was designed to meet the challenging needs of this group. Participants needed to be able to work in unexpected and demanding ways, requiring collaboration and fast thinking. From the evaluators' perspective, whilst we could see the point made by the tutors and course designers, we felt that some time could be gained by more preparatory work and some subtle prompting by tutors to minimise the 'faff' engendered by some groups. We have been advised by the course designers that students were expected to complete certain aspects of the work in order to be able to deal appropriately with the subsequent session. Perhaps more tutor monitoring or prompting would help in this respect. We observed that some groups were waiting for the surprise information (which was injected into the first afternoon of the third session), ie they had gone as far as they were able and were waiting for the next input. This suggested that the task could have a shorter time specification, so that instead of doing further work on day 2 of the third session, candidates could expect to begin their presentation immediately at the start of day 2. In this way, and in similar situations in the second session, time could be saved and put to other creative use. ***Through the restructuring of the module content, most of the issues raised here have been addressed.***

Shelf-life of topics

SBMs were more favourably inclined to the topic of the second residential session (extended schools); they said this was more challenging because of its relevance and that it was very closely related to school business management territory. By contrast, with the topic for the third session, PANDAs, they were less enthusiastic. However, the course team was of the mind that the third topic was an area in which SBMs would need to develop an understanding, especially if they were moving into SMT positions.

In terms of other topics which might be included in future, we recommend that DfES be regularly scanned for likely areas. Possible topics include the impact of Every Child Matters, PFIs and falling rolls. New contractors for the rolled-out course should be advised to liaise closely with DfES, and NCSL should establish a mechanism to ensure that the course remains up to date. We have commented above about changes to the Ofsted framework as a further example.

Online materials

Information about the sample school, Mill Stream, could have been developed so that it has more of an institutional history as the course continued.

At the debriefing meeting, there were several suggestions for developing the online materials to prompt candidates to prepare for their forthcoming sessions. Online diagnostics should be used by tutors to prompt candidates to ascertain that they were up to speed for the next session.

Several SBMs commented that navigation through the online materials was often difficult and time-consuming, and therefore they didn't persist. SBMs felt that the first session was crucial to getting the groups to gel, as without this many felt the use of talk2learn just didn't get started. We found this view echoed by tutors. ***The creation of an extra day on the rolled-out course has obviated this situation.*** The use of invited guests to take part in hot seating was favourably received. A calendar of these has been suggested.

The course as a whole

There was a strong sense that the pilot course did occupy the right ground. It was strategically conceived and SBMs largely saw it at this level. We have already noted comments that they felt less happy with the topic for the last session. At a focus group of 12 respondents, the last task was considered by some to be not challenging enough; "airy-fairy" was a comment used by one SBM about it. The group was, however, strongly in favour of the topic on the second session.

At the pilot DSBM debriefing, there was strong feeling about the need for some bridging material for those who had not undertaken the CSBM course. This might be in the form of an online diagnostic or possibly a telephone interview with a tutor. The latter point raised considerable discussion about how candidates could be brought into the course and how tutors could be used more effectively at the start. It might also be a way for candidates to be persuaded to use talk2learn before the course began, and to enable tutors to know more about their candidates' differing starting points. At the debriefing meeting, comments were made about admissions. It was suggested that bringing a senior, experienced tutor into the admission process to interview candidates by telephone if the latter's applications do not look completely straightforward might be helpful, especially in avoiding high drop-out rates by ensuring that only appropriate candidates were admitted in the first place. ***We now understand that, where there is a question about a candidate's suitability, a conversation is arranged with an experienced tutor. A bridging course has also been created for external candidates.***

Format and organisation

Candidates and tutors were all very much in favour of an extra day. This would provide for a better induction (which for some candidates could include pre-induction, possibly done online) and more time for groups to gel socially and professionally. Candidates need more information from the start, and at the debriefing meeting there was strong support for this in regard to assessment requirements, what candidates could expect from their tutors, and session requirements including preparatory work. Once the course moved out of pilot mode, it would also be possible to provide online samples of work completed by previous candidates, with explanations of the level at which work was graded and why.

Tutors and candidates all said there was a clear need for ICT provision for the first session. Several asked whether, if there were laptops for teachers, there shouldn't be laptops for SBMs. It was felt that for this first session, a ratio of not less than one laptop per two candidates was a minimum requirement. It was suggested at the debriefing meeting that such a ratio might be found in City Learning College locations.

Tutor support

In contrast with the CSBM course, where tutors have taken a very significant and up-front role, on the DSBM pilot course we saw relatively little such activity. At the first session there was an opportunity for candidates to meet their tutors. During the second session, while the candidates were preparing the executive challenge, tutors were running tutorials throughout most of the day and we were not party to these.

During the final residential session we again saw little of the tutors, as they were again providing tutorials, but we did sit in for the presentations. We have been advised by candidates of some apparent inconsistencies in tutor practice and advice; we have also been contacted by one candidate's headteacher with concerns about levels of support and etiquette. We were told of candidates being advised that their work was acceptable – and in one case used as an exemplar – but then told at the last session that it was too long and would have to be cut. This did nothing for the candidates' blood pressure and is an example of inconsistency among tutors that needs to be resolved. We have learnt that the level of support from tutors also varied. It was suggested at the debriefing that one tutor gave 20 times as much time as another. Some greater clarification of the tutor role would be helpful to candidates so that they know what they can reasonably expect and ask for. ***A tutor handbook has now been produced, which makes clear the role of the DSBM tutor. Time did not permit its introduction during the pilot course.***

Tutors should also be paired up so that an experienced tutor works alongside a new one. It was suggested that a ratio of 2 tutors to 20 candidates would be a good way forward. This should also facilitate moderation of assignments.

Several participating SBMs indicated that when they graduate from the course they would be interested in putting something back. At least three commented that they would like to look at the possibility of taking some part in future tutoring. We have also been told by SBMs on the pilot course that NCSL should consider creating consultant school business managers as a way of further enhancing the role and status of senior SBMs. These consultant school business managers could also play a part in aspects of the delivery of other NCSL courses, which would engender joined-up thinking between courses. We observed a very lively discussion at NCSL between a consultant leader (headteacher) and two DSBM candidates. The head had difficulty in seeing SBMs as anything other than administrators. In his view, they were incapable of strategic planning and should not play any part in the strategic development of the school. The two DSBM candidates contradicted that point of view and noted that, as a consultant leader, he should have known about the aims and objectives of the BDP.

Administration

At the debriefing meeting following the pilot course, many constructive suggestions were made about the administration of the course.

- Clear lines need to be established for transferring responsibility between NCSL and contractors, given that NCSL deals with admissions.
- Clarity about protocols for communications to candidates from NCSL and contractors must be established so that candidates cannot fall between two stools.
- In the roll-out, there would be a need for standard template letters to candidates from contractors and NCSL.
- A clear feedback loop is necessary so that in the rectification of any issue, NCSL and contractors receive appropriate information.
- A clear flow of information needs to be established between students and their tutors, but with appropriate links with course administration so that key information is not mislaid, misunderstood or omitted.
- A system of candidate tracking is needed by NCSL to enable up-to-date knowledge of candidate progress.
- There is a need for clarity of information to candidates and other parties; pre-emptive emailing of material to candidates should be possible.

These changes have been introduced into the rolled-out course.

Assessment

This issue has probably caused most critical comment of the DSBM pilot. This has been due principally to lack of clarity of requirements, lack of consistency by tutors, and what candidates subsequently came to see as moving goalposts. Whilst this was understandable in a pilot course, the lessons from this aspect need to be built into the roll-out so they do not recur.

Many SBMs felt the assessment requirements were rather restrictive, particularly in terms of word length. Confusing messages did not help. One candidate reported quite angrily that:

... one of my assignments had been posted as an example of good practice, but I've just been told during the tutorial that it was too long and would have to be cut.

Another commented that she had been told that hers was 55 words over length.

Positive suggestions were made at the debriefing meeting. Clear written expectations must be provided at induction (not later and not changed). Some pre-induction online material could be provided to apprise candidates of course requirements. The provision of a clear portfolio guide would be helpful as would online examples of good, acceptable and unacceptable practice, with explanations provided. A frequently-asked questions (FAQ) sheet could be devised, based upon the experience of the pilot courses. Candidates need to be clear that they are expected to have completed the workbook and scenarios before the residential sessions and that the case study is for assessment. The other work is necessary preparation, and an online pre-session diagnostic might highlight deficiencies in candidate skills or knowledge.

Assessment arrangements for the rolled-out DSBM course have been clarified considerably. The course has been strengthened by requiring an ongoing assessment of modules, rather than end-loading the assessment, as with the CSBM. This may also be a contributory factor to a lower drop-out or withdrawal rate for DSBM.

5.6 Rolled-out DSBM course: data and analysis

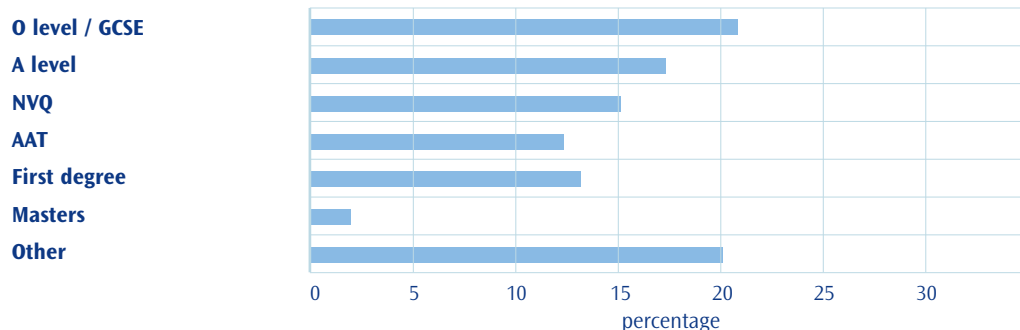
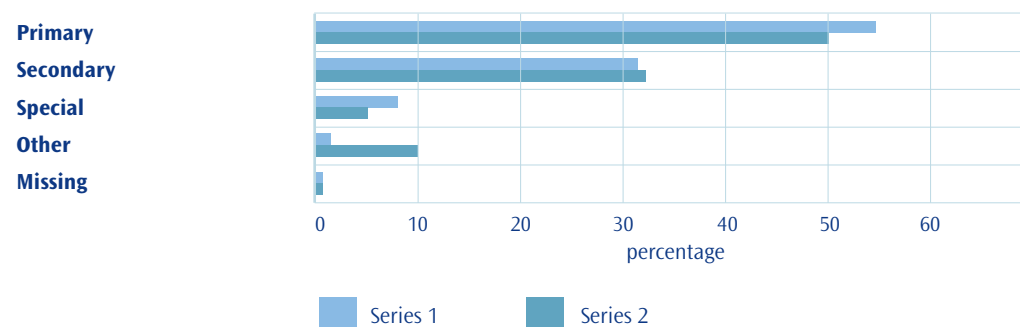
Following recommendations, a rolled-out course was established in the academic year following the completion of the pilot courses. We employed a similar evaluation strategy to that used with CSBM. We visited residential sessions in each of the nine regions to provide national coverage. We had opportunities to observe at each of the DSBM course's three separate residential sessions. Visits included observations, discussions with tutors, students and other key personnel, and examination of course documentation.

5.6.1 DSBM candidate data

This section presents data on DSBM candidates, taken from the NCSL database. Basic demographic data on respondents at the first and second residential sessions is given in table 5.1. Returns from session 1 indicate 8.5 per cent were male and 86 per cent female; session 2 returns (where there were fewer missing responses) showed 12.5 per cent male and 87.5 per cent female. Prior qualifications and school phase are shown respectively in figures 5.1 and 5.2.

Table 5.1: DSBM cohort composition

Start date	Cohort number	Number of candidates	Male	Female	Primary	Middle	Secondary	Other
11/03	Pilots	100	13	87	39	0	59	2
11/04	1	180	11	89	56	2	31	11
06/05	2	200	11	89	56	1	29	14
11/05	3	150	9	91	51	3	38	8

Figure 5.1: DSBM candidates by prior level of qualification**DSBM Candidates prior Level of Qualification****Figure 5.2: School phase of candidates at DSBM residential sessions 1 and 2****School Phase of respondents**

session 1 (series 1), n=117; session 2 (series 2), n=72

5.6.2 DSBM residential evaluation surveys

For cohort 1, we made visits to three sessions as part of the first residential session, four to the second residential session, and two to the third residential session. We found the tutors very accommodating, tolerant of our presence and willing to comment on aspects of course delivery.

We had been sent draft materials and information on session content in advance, and had devised, in collaboration with NCSL, separate evaluation questionnaires focusing on the key purpose of the residential sessions (see appendix 8). These were administered with varying degrees of success. We counted three questionnaires. The questionnaire for the first session elicited 117 responses. For the second session we received 72 responses. We experienced some difficulties in obtaining completed questionnaires and with contractors deploying the appropriate one – circumstances outside our control.

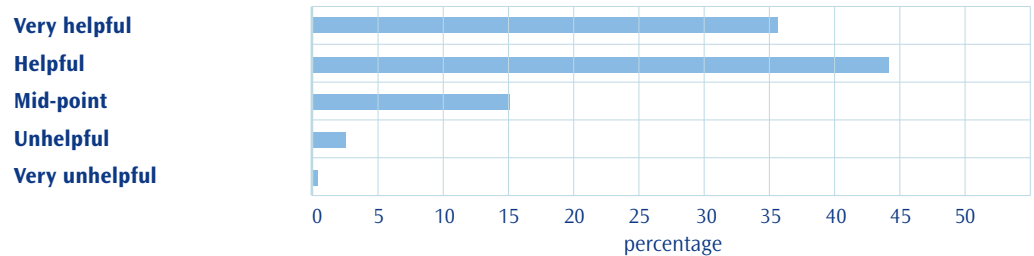
Regarding the questionnaire for the third session, we received comments and, in two cases, written feedback indicating that students would find it easier to complete questionnaires if they were distributed at the start of each session for completion at the end of the session.

5.6.2.1 Summary of responses

Data from these questionnaires is presented in the following sections.

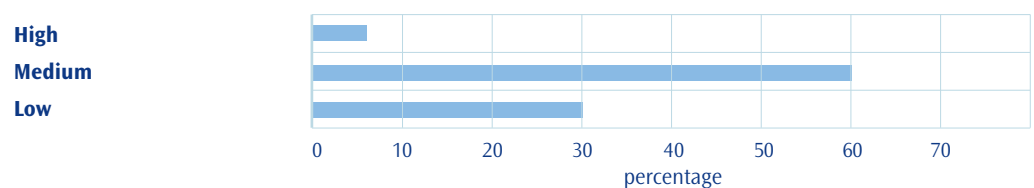
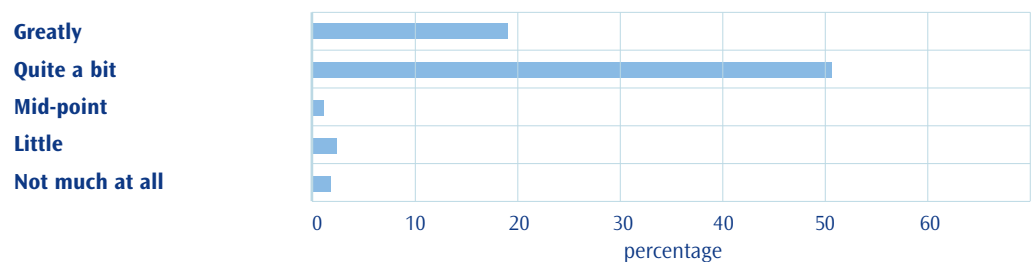
First session: day 1

Responses to workshop activities during the two days of the first session presented a generally good picture. Some activities were rated highly, though there was a smaller number about which candidates appeared less enthusiastic. In the following analyses and comments, a favourable response is considered to be in either of the two highest categories on the five-point scale. On this basis, the introductory workshops on day 1 were well received, as all of them were favourably scored by two-thirds to four-fifths of respondents.

Figure 5.3: Introductory workshop**Introductory workshop**

Importantly, four-fifths of respondents found the introductory workshop on day 1 helpful or very helpful and only five per cent did not. This pattern was repeated for the next three workshops, indicating that respondents were helped by the activities. In workshops 4 and 5, the proportion of neutral responses increased to around 30 per cent, and whilst the majority of respondents indicated favourably, it might be suggested that candidates were less taken with futuring and with personal management.

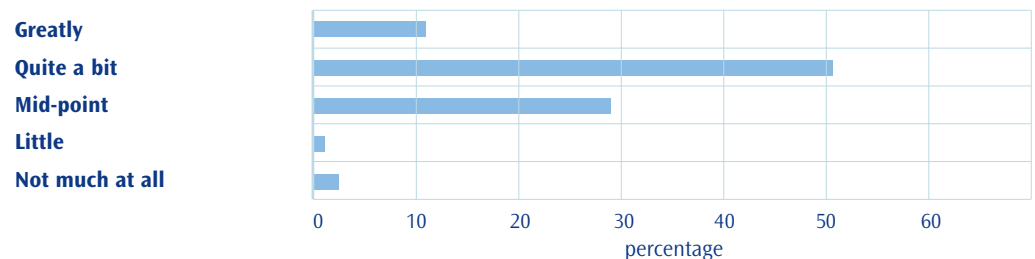
Two assessments were made of SBMs' understanding of strategic management – before the course (figure 5.4) and after completing workshop 3 (figure 5.5).

Figure 5.4: Understanding of strategic management before the course**Perceived understanding of Strategic Management before the Course****Figure 5.5: Increased understanding of strategic management after workshop 3****Workshop 3 on Strategic Management**

After workshop 3, nearly all candidates felt that their understanding was average to above average, with well over two-thirds indicating the two highest categories, confirming the quality of teaching and learning in the workshop.

Figure 5.6: Understanding of futuring after workshop 4

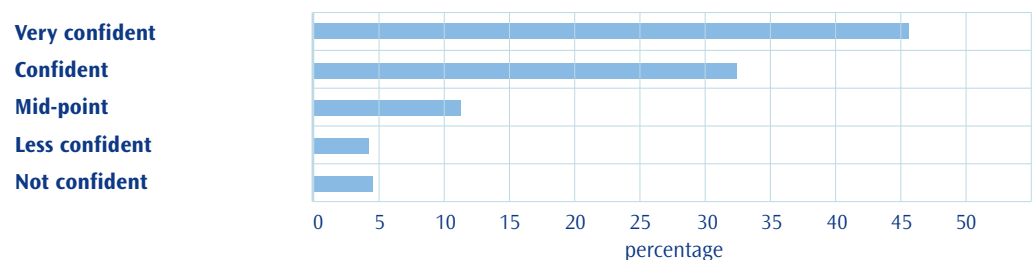
Workshop 4 on Futuring



Turning to workshop 4 on futuring, there was again a positive response. However, nearly 30 per cent of candidates reported at the midpoint of the scale, a situation later repeated with the workshop on personal management.

Figure 5.7: Understanding of online learning after workshop 6

Workshop 6: On-line Learning



Responses shown in figure 5.7 indicate that candidates felt secure working in an online environment. For some this was a result of their having previously completed the CSBM course.

First session: day 2

On day 2 of the first residential session, the workshops seemed almost uniformly to be less highly rated, with fewer responses at the favourable end of the scale. The main increase was at the midpoint of the scale, with around a third of respondents indicating this. There were never more than 15 per cent reporting at the unfavourable end.

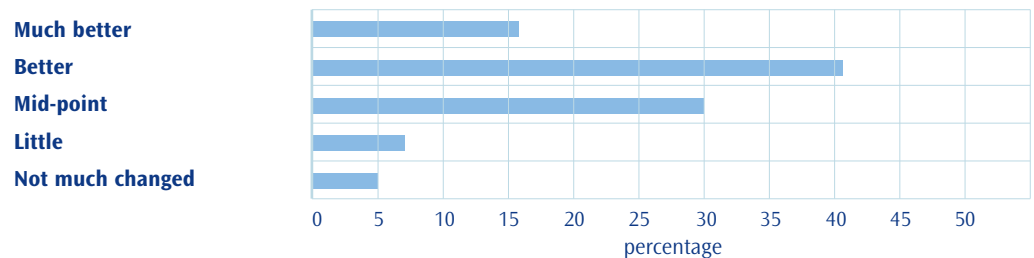
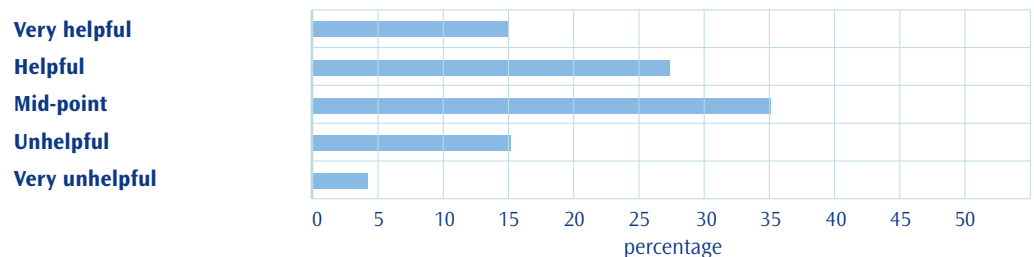
Figure 5.8: Understanding of project planning after workshop 7**Workshop 7: Project Planning**

Figure 5.8 provides a clear example of this trend for day 2. Overall, day 1 was more strongly rated. Scrutiny of the open-response sections of the questionnaires (see below) provided no further data to clarify this issue.

Second session: days 1 and 2

Data collected on the workshops of the second residential session is presented below. Responses in all but one case give a clear indication that the activities of this session were rated strongly: 3 showed 80 per cent or more of responses at the favourable end of the scale. A further 8 were rated at or over the 70 per cent mark and only 3 workshops showed midpoint ratings greater than 25 per cent.

Figure 5.9: Understanding of formal communication skills after workshop 4**Workshop 4: Formal Communication Skills**

The data in figure 5.9 provides the one blip in the evaluations. The workshop on formal communication skills was not rated as being as helpful as the others. We provide more detailed comment on the content of this workshop in section 5.6.2.2 on course materials.

Data presented in figures 5.10 and 5.11 indicates candidates' developing understanding of school improvement.

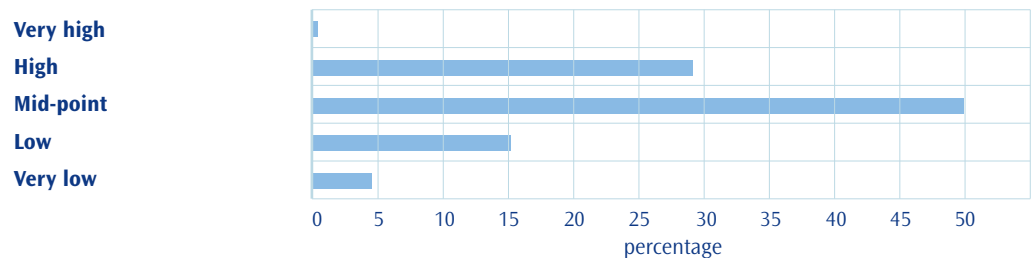
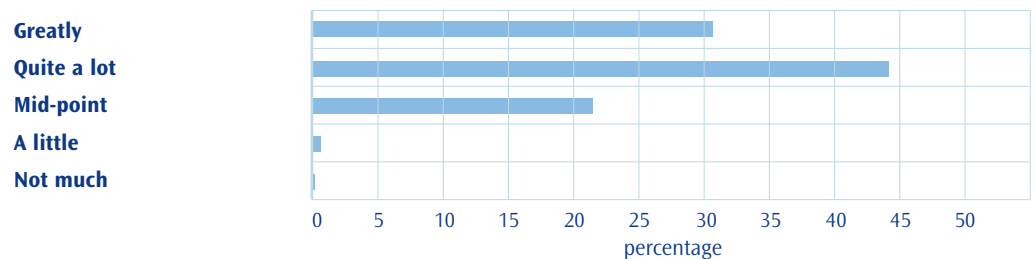
Figure 5.10: Understanding of school improvement before the course**Candidates' Perceived Prior Understanding of School Improvement****Figure 5.11: Increased understanding of school improvement after workshop 2****Has Workshop 2 changed your understanding of School Improvement**

Figure 5.10 shows that candidates saw their prior understanding of school improvement as not strong, with only 27 per cent indicating above the midpoint. However, figure 5.11 indicates a clear shift upwards after workshop 2, with almost four-fifths of respondents rating their understanding in the higher two categories, showing that the workshop had a clear impact.

Our view is that the second residential session received, with one exception, consistently higher feedback than the first. This may reflect SBMs' growing confidence as they progressed through the course.

Open responses

Both questionnaires had open-response sections. This option was used by some candidates, and significant comments are presented below.

Open responses from the questionnaire on session 1

A key point raised by candidates was the overall timing of the course:

Deadlines for project 1 too soon, not enough research time because of the timing of this residential session (Christmas holidays).

We are conscious that NCSL and providers have attempted to adjust the timing of workshops. There is no single answer to candidates' busy workplace schedules. Generally, we felt the course timing to be appropriate.

There was comment about getting headteachers involved:

Information [should be] fed to heads via NCSL as to the importance of the certificate.

Headteachers are significant stakeholders in schools and it would seem appropriate to involve them in the course as soon as is practicable.

Assessment arrangements attracted some comments:

It is still unclear what exactly is expected for the assessment. Greater clarity overall would be good.

Notwithstanding these comments, the arrangements for assessment were better than on the pilot course.

There was some minor criticism of the workbooks:

Improve manuals: mistakes, bits missing (compared to online) and some very unclear.

NCSL has improved the quality of materials for the candidates.

There were some candidate criticisms about venues, and the need for travel between two course sites. These criticisms were, in the overall scale of the course, relatively minor. The DSBM, in the eyes of the candidates, got off to a good start.

Open responses from the questionnaire on session 2

Three issues featured in these open responses, although their weight was small in relation to the sample size. There were comments about aspects of the provision at two of the residential session locations. Problems had arisen over timing of materials, occasioned by a contractor moving the timing of a session outside the window prescribed by NCSL. There was also some comment about the style of a particular tutor.

5.6.2.2 DSBM course materials

This section focuses on the materials used for the second residential session. We observed second sessions at four venues, noting similar issues across venues. We were therefore of the opinion that observed difficulties (such as the issue of the formal communication skills workshop, noted in section 5.6.2.1) were due more to course materials than to tutor error.

Workshop 4 of the second session was entitled ‘The challenge for education: social expectations’. Its stated purpose was ‘the development of more formal communication skills’. The material provided was a diagram taken from Murgatroyd and Morgan (1992). This diagram was not easy to interpret, and it was actually presented incorrectly. The task candidates were set seemed very demanding. In the first place, it was one better suited to policy-makers than to school SBMs. Candidates at all of the venues we visited struggled to make sense of this exercise, and found the time spent on it frustrating. Tutors also struggled to help candidates make sense of the diagram (one tutor noted that the original was different from the version given to candidates, and whilst this made people feel better, it didn’t make the task easier or more useful). We think the purpose of the workshop is sound, but the materials were not helpful in the learning process.

Workshop 3, ‘What is quality in education?’, received a few comments, one noting that the material (Crosby, Juran & Deming, 1980) was rather dated at over 25 years old. For candidates working at this level, it might be more helpful if they were challenged by current material; for example, sections from *The Challenges to Educational Leadership* (Bottery, 2004) would stimulate some searching questions and higher-level thinking appropriate for school leaders.

Workshop 6, entitled ‘Says who? critical thinking’, seemed to cause logistical difficulties and required more background than the candidates possessed. At all of the venues we visited, tutors needed the help of a second person in running this workshop. On two occasions this came from the provider’s leader (who happened to be visiting) and on two others, the evaluators were invited to help (which of course we were happy to do). The academic papers provided were

quite difficult for the candidates, especially given the short time they had had to read them (occasioned by alterations to session timing); only a handful of candidates at each venue had actually read the articles. Many critical points could be made about these papers, but candidates were unable to do so because they did not have adequate background knowledge of the authors and their professional links, the context, and the differences between school effectiveness and school improvement. If the aim of this workshop was to develop critical thinking, the materials were not appropriate.

5.6.3 Residential session satisfaction surveys

A further sampling of candidate responses from a later cohort confirms the views about the first residential session summarised in section 5.6.2. For the second residential session, of 18 substantive items on the survey, over three-quarters of candidates reported levels of satisfaction at or above the midpoint on 15 of these items. Pre-course administration was the only item to score below 70 per cent. In responses after the third residential session this had improved (up to 97.4 per cent) and on only one item were less than 80 per cent of candidates reporting satisfaction at below the midpoint. This represents a significant achievement.

5.6.4 DSBM course impact survey, 2006

5.6.4.1 Impact survey sample

Data was collected using a survey instrument (appendix 9) from candidates who have completed DSBM. A total of 118 candidates from cohort 1 responded to this survey. Of these, 9.4 per cent were male and 90.6 per cent female. School phase responses showed 60.9 per cent primary, 0.8 per cent middle school and 32.2 per cent secondary, with 6.1 per cent classifying themselves as 'other' and 2.5 per cent offering no valid answer. Within the group of primary school SBMs, the mean school roll was 321, with 90 the smallest and 720 the largest. Among secondary school SBMs, the mean school roll was 1,094, with the smallest reported as 480 and the largest as 1,850. SBMs reported that their mean length of service in post was 6.5 years, with the shortest a matter of a few weeks and the longest 19 years.

5.6.4.2 SBM role

In line with findings in other surveys such as the University of Lincoln baseline study (University of Lincoln, 2004), respondents revealed a wide range of job titles for the work they do. Among DSBM graduates, 47 different job titles were reported (table 5.2). As a measure of impact, graduates were asked if their job title had changed *as a result of completing the DSBM course*. Table 5.3 shows, quite strikingly, that job titles of 35 per cent of SBMs in the sample had changed.

Table 5.2: Current job title

	Frequency	Percentage
Administration manager	1	0.8
Administrative assistant	1	0.8
Administrative manager	1	0.8
Area manager	1	0.8
Bursar	17	14.4
Bursar & admin manager	1	0.8
Bursar & administrator	1	0.8
Business & communications manager	1	0.8
Business & finance manager	1	0.8
Business director	1	0.8
Business manager	7	5.9
Chair of governors	1	0.8
Children's centre business manager	1	0.8
College manager	1	0.8
Confederation business manager	1	0.8
Director	1	0.8
Director of finance & administration	1	0.8
Director of support services	1	0.8
Finance administrator	1	0.8
Finance & administration manager	2	1.7
Finance & premises manager	1	0.8
Finance manager	1	0.8
Finance officer	1	0.8
Financial controller	1	0.8
Headteacher's PA & administration manager	1	0.8
Office manager	3	2.5
Office manager & school business manager	1	0.8
Office & business manager	1	0.8
Operations manager	1	0.8
Personal assistant to the head	1	0.8
School admin & finance officer	1	0.8
School administrator	4	3.4
School office manager	1	0.8
School business manager	47	39.8
School secretary & office manager	1	0.8
Senior admin officer	1	0.8
Senior administrator	1	0.8
Senior finance officer	1	0.8
Senior finance officer, schools finance team	1	0.8
Senior manager, facilities	1	0.8
Support services manager	1	0.8
Support staff manager	1	0.8
Whole-school administration & support services manager	1	0.8
Total	117	100.0

Table 5.3: Has your job title changed as a result of DSBM?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	41	35.0
No	76	65.0
Total	117	100.0

Changes to job titles often represent the final part of a process of professional development, so this data is positive.

SBMs were also asked to indicate whether or not their role had changed. Here the data is more revealing in that the overwhelming majority indicated that their role had changed (table 5.4).

Table 5.4: Has your role changed as a result of DSBM?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	104	88.9
No	13	11.1
Total	117	100.0

Responses to this item from primary school SBMs were overwhelming, with 94 per cent reporting that their role had changed. In the secondary sector, responses were still very positive (78 per cent), though not as strong as with primary colleagues.

Membership of the SMT is considered an important mark of the strategic nature of the SBM's role. With this DSBM sample the data is shown in table 5.5.

Table 5.5: Are you a member of an SMT?

	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	91	77.8
No	26	22.2
Total	117	100.0

Given the strategic nature of the DSBM course, it is important to note that over a fifth of SBMs were not members of their schools' main strategic group. Of those who indicated that they were not SMT members, two-thirds were in primary schools and a third in secondary schools. Of these SBMs a third indicated that they had saved money for their schools, in amounts ranging from £500 to £65,000. Just three indicated that they had brought in new money, but two-thirds reported that the course had had a big impact on their ability to operate as a leader.

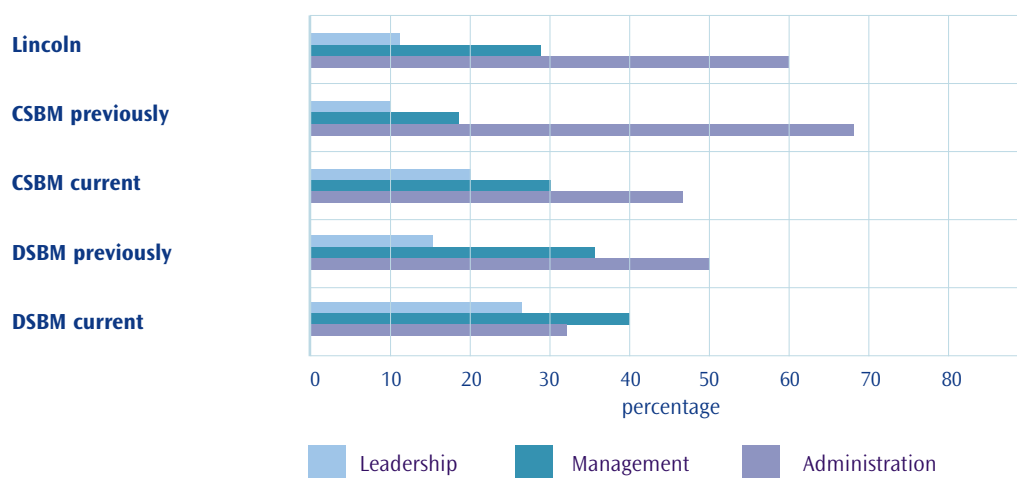
Closer analysis of the SMT membership issue would seem to suggest that, following earlier studies (University of Lincoln, 2004; Wallace & Hall, 1994), entry of SBMs onto this group is quite new and a growing development. Almost 40 per cent of SBMs reported that they had been on an SMT for a year or less. Nearly 80 per cent reported that they had only been a member for two years. Under 10 per cent reported being on an SMT for more than three years. The size of SMT differed between primary and secondary phase, with a mean for secondary schools of 6.8 and for primary schools of 4.6.

In relation to support staff and their management, primary SBMs reported that on average they were managing 8.7 support staff, with some managing none but around 10 per cent managing over 25. In the secondary sector, the mean number of support staff was 26.8, with the lowest being 1 and the highest 91.

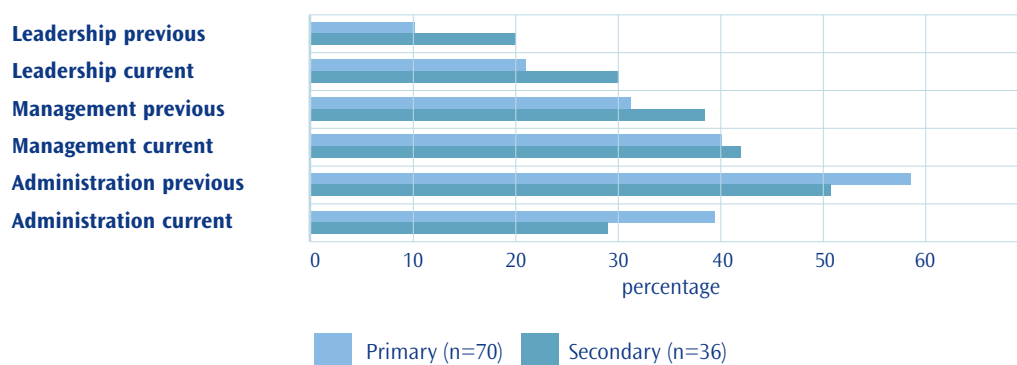
Of critical interest in the role of the SBM are perceptions of how they spend their time and the classification of tasks which occupy that time. Respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of time spent on leadership, management and administration, and to estimate the allocation of this both at the time of this survey and before they undertook the DSBM course. Overall comparisons are shown in figure 5.12, including a comparison with CSBM survey 2005 and the University of Lincoln baseline study (University of Lincoln, 2004).

Figure 5.12: SBMs' self-reported use of time

How bursars spend their time – comparison between studies



As with the CSBM course, DSBM graduates reported a substantial redistribution of time away from administration and towards management and, in particular, leadership. Comparison between phases of schooling reveals some differences, but the overall pictures are broadly similar, as shown in figure 5.13.

Figure 5.13: How SBMs spend their time: primary vs secondary**How SBMs spend time: comparison between primary and secondary schools**

The impact of a course can be considered both in terms of candidates' sense of the development of their own understanding, and in terms of their practical impact in school. Candidates were asked to rate changes in their levels of understanding on a three-point scale (very much better, better, about the same); and to rate their practical impact in school on a five-point scale (1 for a big impact, 5 for little impact). These ratings were sought in terms of the DSBM course's three modules: strategic management, school improvement and change management. Results are shown in tables 5.6–5.8 as cross-tabulations for each module.

Table 5.6: Impact and understanding of strategic management module (n=113)**Strategic management impact**

	Big impact				Little impact	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	
Strategic management understanding						
Very much better	42	28	15	2	3	90
Better	4	11	5	1	0	21
About the same	1	0	1	0	0	2
Total	47	39	21	3	3	113

This data suggests that for over three-quarters of the sample (shaded red), a reported increase in understanding correlates with a perceived impact in school. For a professional development course this represents a very strong outcome.

Table 5.7: Impact and understanding of school improvement module (n=113)**School improvement impact**

	Big impact			Little impact		Total
School improvement understanding	1	2	3	4	5	
Very much better	30	25	12	0	2	69
Better	6	21	14	0	0	41
About the same	2	1	0	0	0	3
Total	38	47	26	0	2	113

About 72 per cent of the sample (shaded red) felt that where their understanding of school improvement had increased so they were able to have some significant impact in their schools. A slightly larger group (about 23 per cent), whilst rating their understanding as quite improved, felt that they were only having an average impact.

Table 5.8: Impact and understanding of change management module (n=113)**Change management impact**

	Big impact			Little impact		Total
Change management understanding	1	2	3	4	5	
Very much better	33	23	12	0	2	70
Better	14	24	3	0	1	42
About the same	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	47	48	15	0	3	113

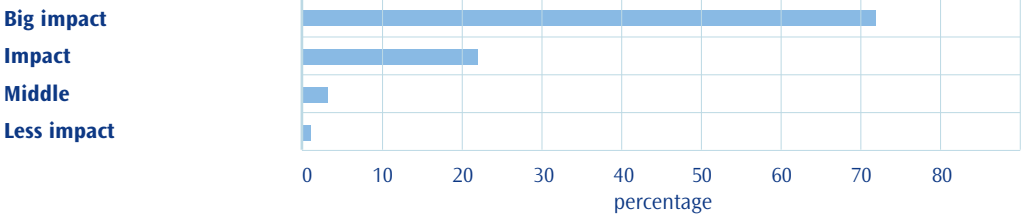
In the area of change management, 83 per cent (shaded red) reported that their greater understanding was related to greater impact. It is worth noting that data in table 5.8 seems to indicate that a larger percentage (33 per cent) of graduates reported change in their understanding than for the two previous modules.

In terms of financial impact, 46 per cent of the sample indicated that they had been able to achieve savings, although only 27 per cent were able to report a figure. This ranged from £200 to £180,000. Just over a quarter of the sample reported that they had attracted additional or new money, and all of these were able to report specific sums. The smallest was £300 and the largest was £1,000,000. These figures should be seen in the context of schools' annual budgets; the mean budget for the sample was £2,060,413, with the lowest at £210,000 and the largest reported at £6,500,000.

Part of the survey instrument gathered data on graduates' perceptions of their development in terms of confidence, technical knowledge, understanding of schools, personal satisfaction and finally their ability to operate as leaders. Graduates were asked to indicate their perceptions on a five-point scale, where 1 is a big impact and 5 is little impact. This data is presented in figures 5.14–5.18 below.

Figure 5.14: Course impact on personal confidence

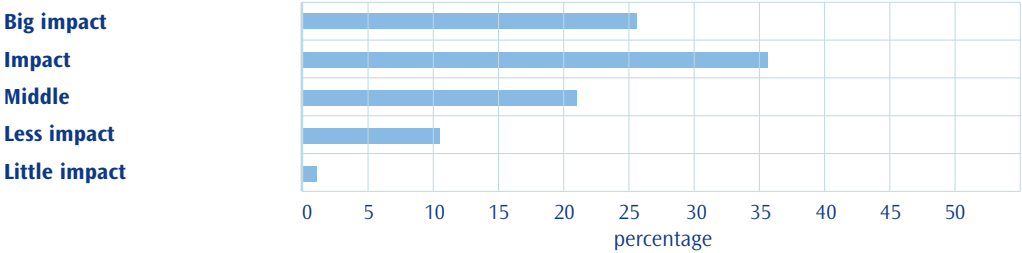
Personal confidence



In terms of personal confidence, 92.9 per cent indicated that the course had had a significant impact.

Figure 5.15: Course impact on technical knowledge

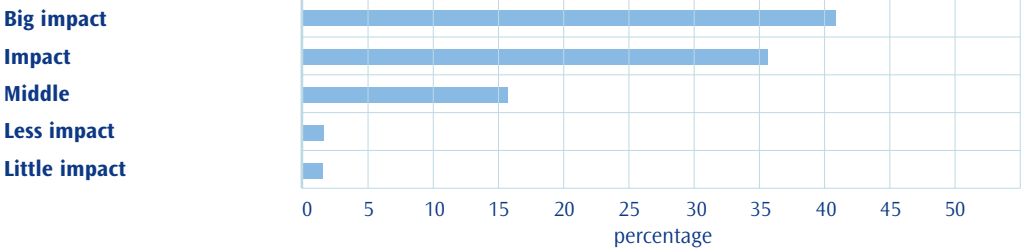
Technical knowledge



Here data suggests either that more candidates had greater prior knowledge (so the reported impact was more towards the midpoint) or that the course could have been more demanding in this respect. Nevertheless, 64.6 per cent reported impact at the two highest levels.

Figure 5.16: Course impact on understanding schools

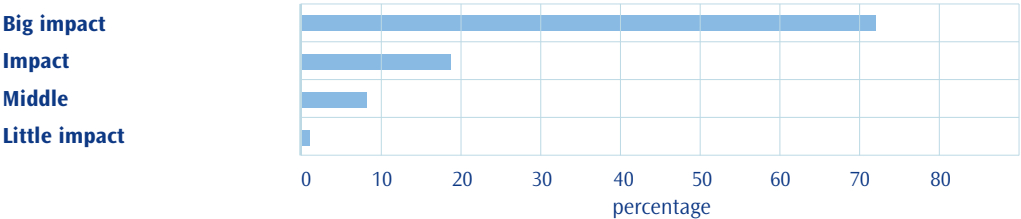
Understanding Schools



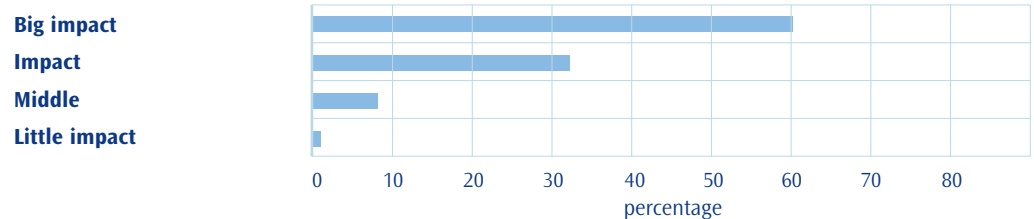
Here 78.8 per cent of respondents indicated that the course had had an impact at the two top levels on the scale.

Figure 5.17: Personal satisfaction

Personal satisfaction



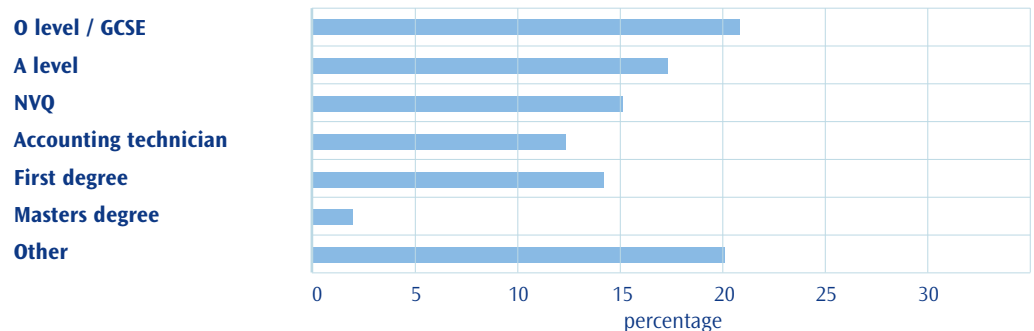
It is very encouraging for the course providers that graduates reported so positively in this respect, with 92.1 per cent reporting a very high degree of personal satisfaction.

Figure 5.18: Ability to operate as a leader**Ability to operate as a leader**

This figure presents very encouraging data: 92.9 per cent of graduates reported that their ability to operate as a leader had been very substantially enhanced by the course.

In terms of course delivery, 90.5 per cent reported above the midpoint of the scale that the learning objectives of the course had been met, and 60.0 per cent reported above the midpoint on satisfaction with the online and printed materials. Tutor efficiency was highly rated by 86.1 per cent, and tutor support was strongly commended by 81.9 per cent. Tutor online support was less strongly rated, with 72.4 per cent commending it above the midpoint. Of the sample, 82.6 per cent rated the residential sessions and the fitness of the venues above the midpoint. Pre-course support was less strongly rated, with 65.5 per cent indicated above the midpoint.

Finally, our sample reported on their highest level of educational qualification. This data is presented in figure 5.19.

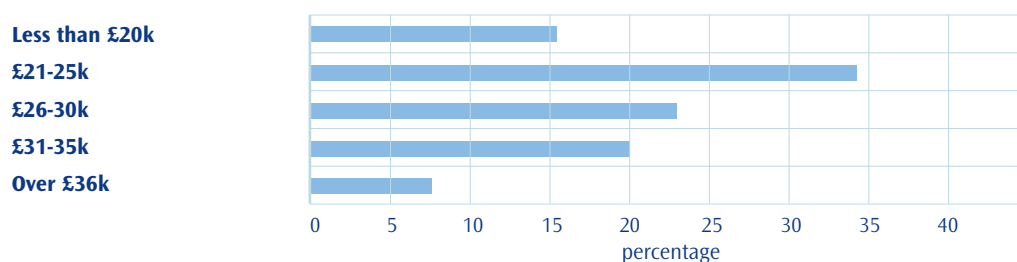
Figure 5.19: Highest level of prior qualification, DSBM**DSBM highest level of prior qualification**

This shows an even spread of levels of qualification across the sample group. Given such a background in previous educational experience, the overall ratings for the course indicated earlier are very commendable.

In terms of salary, a point which many individual SBMs and headteachers have commented on to us in interviews, survey data indicates that the situation is heavily weighted towards the lower end of the pay scale, with almost 50 per cent reporting that they are paid under £25,000 (figure 5.20).

Figure 5.20: Reported salary levels, DSBM

DSBM reported salary levels



As regards overall professional development, it should be noted that all but one graduate would recommend the course, a return of 99.2 per cent. As regards the course as the start of a professional development path, almost two-thirds expressed interest in further study.

5.6.5 Interviews with school business managers in school

There were 12 full transcripts of interviews with DSBM graduates available to us. This sample includes SBMs from both primary and secondary schools. Most of the schools are in urban or metropolitan settings. Three schools in the sample, though in town locations, serve essentially rural areas. Two schools are in village locations. There were 2 primary schools and the remaining 10 were secondary schools. The pupil roll of the schools varies between 37 and 1,262. The length of service of these SBMs varies between 1.5 years and 15 years.

Interview data is presented according to the five main areas that framed our interviews:

- school context and career history
- impact on SBMs and on their schools
- present roles and future directions
- relationship with heads and SMTs
- development of support-staff roles

Three interviewees had recently come to the role of SBM from other professions: two joined explicitly as external candidates and the third, though not participating in the NCSL external candidate workshop, was in close contact with the consultant from DfES.

5.6.5.1 School context and career history

School contexts for these SBMs vary considerably. There were challenging issues facing most of them. These ranged from confederation (with a pupil roll in one of the constituent schools of just 37, but with a business manager thought to be a necessary part of the structure) to amalgamation of secondary schools and all the uncertainty that brings. Some schools had just acquired specialist status; others were struggling with ageing buildings which were not really fit for purpose. One was an ancient foundation, with foundation governors and a growing building programme. Another was a community college. One of the primary schools, in a city location, was in an Edwardian building and was suffering from falling rolls. SBMs reported leading and managing a growing number of support staff, ranging from under 10 to 110.

SBMs in this sample report very different career backgrounds. The variety of experience which this can bring to schools is a potential benefit. Some examples are presented below.

I came into education in 1999 from working in the police force, where I was a neighbourhood watch officer, and I'd previously worked for CEGB, Nuclear Electric, then as a clerical apprentice, moving on up to running the finance and purchasing departments at a power station.

For many years I was in London with firms of surveyors and valuers mainly in the commercial side and enjoying the late commercial property boom of the 1960s. Then I got a job with Qantas Airways as their assistant property manager in Europe ... I started studying there and eventually came out as what is today a chartered marketer and now a chartered manager. That really began to push me in a completely different area although ... always ... property orientated but I did find that my marketing and management skills were something I really enjoyed ... I ended up as industrial development officer for the city of Sheffield.

In this sample, eight of the SBMs were really enjoying their jobs:

I love the school business manager's job, because of the various areas; it's so varied.

Two more were striving to come to terms with aspects of school culture that they were not finding easy to understand:

... but there have been others who have been ... peers of my leadership or peers of mine, perhaps within the SBM community, who've not enjoyed that because I've been seen to be a threat and that has then created the frustration. I've become frustrated with that.

Two were experiencing difficulties with their headteacher (see section 5.6.6.2).

I'm not part of the senior management team. I'm still not. I brought it up when I had my certificate. I brought it up last year when I spoke to the head and to my school management. They talked about making me a business manager and doing the job description and we had meetings but it hasn't happened.

5.6.5.2 **Impact on school business managers and on their schools**

In this section we report on SBMs' views on the benefits of the DSBM course and its impacts on them and on their schools.

Benefits from the course include preparation for the educational world, networking, and preparation for a role on the SMT. The fact that the course was cost-neutral to the school was a key point for some.

I think ... DSBM prepares you very much for an educational world.

The reason I did the SBM pilot [was] that it didn't cost the school anything.

... having done the DSBM and sitting on the SMT with the background from this course I now have a much broader understanding of what the institution as a whole is about.

Our sample of SBMs report a variety of impacts. For some the course has, in their view, helped them to relieve the headteacher of a range of tasks which in turn has freed up time for the headteacher to tackle other priorities:

... everything that I know [the head] has to deal with – and every other small school is the same – and that is why you're getting so many headteachers off with stress. You cannot possibly do everything that's being asked of you and I really do believe generally that the small schools are the ones that need a business manager.

It frees [the head] up some of the time ... he's actually gone back into the classroom this year, he doesn't particularly enjoy it but at least ... I've started going out on a lot of appointments that he would normally go to on leading edge and things like that ... I've started to go to those, which leaves him time to do other things.

For others, impact was found in terms of developed negotiating skills which resulted in more favourable contracting arrangements or reduced costs:

Getting grounds maintenance, we'd gone to a different company ... saving us £5,000 a year on that.

We've almost halved our energy costs.

For two, impact was found in the insight they had gained from the course:

It's given me a huge insight into what the school is as a whole estate.

The strategic module has been, for me, probably the one that I've gained the most out of, and I didn't think I would at the time, but now I'm back in situ and I'm actually doing the job, it's the one that you look back on and you think, "Oh yes, actually I am doing it."

Another had what she called her "100 days" file, in which was a range of objectives to be fulfilled as a result of completing the course:

A lot of things I would love to apply and a lot of things I've still got ... in my 100 days course file, for instance, the business continuity plan.

For two others, important benefits were in the form of learning about themselves and how they were operating:

It was something in my portfolio after one of the modules in my reflection. I was really questioning my own style of doing things and thinking that actually I was being too authoritarian in the school and that ... I had to look to see it in my management style and I was quite depressed about it ... I think we came to this change management module ... and I suddenly realised that ... it was something where I was in conflict with the teaching staff, but it was something that was imposed by the local authority ... Every school was asked to put together an emergency plan because we were flooded.

The big worry was that if it was ever put into place, would teachers actually accept commands, so we did a test and they wouldn't, because they could not accept the fact that they were not going to be running it, they were going to be told what to do and do it now. I talked it through with my mentor and I said "Well, you know, I'm looking back to my doubts about that" but I realised now that style was actually needed in this situation.

I think it's given me more confidence and I know ... what my capabilities are now, certainly from the long-term strategic planning point of view, and looking at the school development plan. I actually did a business continuity plan for the school.

One experienced SBM felt that her greatest impact as a result of the DSBM course was in leading her local group of SBMs. This was particularly important, in her view, because the local authority was not helpful.

Within that SBM group in [our school], of which I'm the secondary chair, probably a bigger impact in that I've been able to support colleagues, and so the impact has been with colleagues.

Sadly for two, they felt there had been no impact in their schools, and this was attributed entirely to the approach of their headteachers.

I don't regret doing [the CSBM and DSBM] at all ... so far as I can see, it's not had any impact whatsoever on my job except it's given me greater insights, but it's not really changed the job at all ... and my connection with the rest of the school is less than it used to be. We have got a new head. He has changed my role.

I don't feel that I'm used to my sort of potential.

In comparison with CSBM data presented earlier, analysis of the DSBM transcripts shows less evidence of tangible impact in an operational sense. The DSBM data did, however, give a sense that SBMs were adopting a wider view of their schools – a more strategic and future-orientated perspective – and where relationships with heads were favourably presented, there did appear to be the possibility of considerable benefit to the school, the SBM and the head. Some of these aspects are detailed in the next section.

5.6.5.3 Present roles and future directions

The range of responsibilities and tasks indicated by our sample exemplify a wide and varied range. It also provides a good example of the growing breadth of business life inside a school.

I line-manage teaching assistants and the non-teaching support staff.

It was a new post ... their idea was that it was to take work away from the headteacher. It was to support the finance officer [and] was then to reshape the non-teaching elements of the school. The response from the staff to the question "What do you want this person to do?" was "Everything".

I'm health and safety officer, I'm the school manager, budget is about just over £6 million, I do the personnel, I am data protection, freedom of information, I oversee the PFI contract, I am therefore obviously the catering and the cleaning contract and anything to do with premises. I also am involved with procurement so like the premises ... that's in my remit.

Throughout the interviews, we found that SBMs from the DSBM course were, in many respects, expressing a future-orientated view of school development, the enhancing of their role, their own career aspirations and overall a more strategic perception. We provide some examples of this because it represents important evidence of the growth of the school business manager profession, through the perceptions of experienced SBMs. The interview data lends itself to a two-fold categorisation: comments that relate to SBM role progression and those that exemplify business development.

Role progression

Issues suggested by SBMs range from their own immediate career progression, through how a school's support functions might be reconfigured as part of remodelling, dealing with teaching and learning responsibilities, to more radical ideas about the leadership and management of groups of schools.

I can see myself here for a number of years still, but that is my one concern: where would I then go, and I wouldn't want to go into county hall or do anything like that.

I personally think I've just got a lot to give to the department, and I'd like to spend more time ... pushing the boundaries and driving them forward ... I would like to do something else, be it consultant SBMs if they do it, and I must admit I think consultant SBMs would be the way I'd much rather go at the moment ... But in terms of future I'd like to be business manager, until I can become a headteacher.

More radically, this SBM had already been in discussion with her headteacher about ways forward which could fundamentally alter the way that a group of schools might be led and managed:

It was suggested to the head that [another school nearby] needs your help, go have a little look around and think. He wants me to help in terms of a shared basis, shared resources ... I think it's a waste for him to go, to stand alone – not economical [as] it should be, and to start to share resources and maximise those resources; joint payroll that the head talked about before ... we could actually run an expanded ship. You'd have four [schools], you'd have four directors who'd all confide directly to the main board, with [the head] being the ... strategic leader in charge of them all. And who knows whether four, five or six are the right numbers around. Certainly one is not the right number.

To go into those areas where you want to see a bigger business, we are a small enterprise here and we need to be enterprising for ... those kinds of confederated schools where you are putting four or five schools in a basket together, it happens almost by chance. I don't know what you would call it. You would have a head-teacher as a chief executive. You would have somebody as a financier or an operations director, something along those lines ... they are the areas for people like me.

Another SBM was looking critically at the how key support staff are trained and recruited, and how SBMs could be a key part of an Ofsted inspection team:

Most companies ... are very keen to train their staff and the attitude is that, well, there is always the risk that we are training and they might leave, but if we're a good company we'll keep them and that's cheaper than trying to recruit.

Under the new Ofsted framework, one of the inspectors ought to be a school business manager because, quite frankly, I could walk into a lot of schools and really find out what's going on ... just key questions and you would know then, particularly in areas of compliance.

Business development

Some SBMs were proactively involved in developing the business side of the school:

We are just investigating at the moment providing meals for primary schools. There are a number of primary schools who are looking for a hot-meal service and it's something which we may be able to provide, looking at the feasibility of that, and it may be that, just as our internal meals aren't requir[ed], then we may be finding a market out there – but it's to sell them.

We're still having a few problems ... so much so, that the headteacher is looking to buy a separate property. In fact I went with him yesterday to look at a garage property that we can do for disaffected kids who are bored to tears with French and ... science and maths. We can get them in a ritual where they use mathematics in a practical way, coming back to the old secondary schools stuff really.

Not surprisingly these developments are dependent upon the relationship between the SBM and their headteacher. As already indicated, most of our sample of SBMs were in good relationships with their headteachers. Only in one case had the role been curtailed (in the SBM's view) and in only one case was the SBM unhappy with the relationship with her head and the consequent lack of development of her role. She has since gained a business manager position in another school.

5.6.5.4 Relationship with heads and SMTs

Throughout our evaluation study, we have been continually reminded by SBMs of the importance of heads understanding the potential of the SBM role and the benefits of the BDP. In this section we present interview data from the perspective of SBMs on their relationship with the head and in some cases the SMT. All but two of the sample were members of the SMT. Later we present data gathered from interviews with some headteachers. Our data suggests that heads' views of SBMs can be put into three categories: not positive, neutral and positive. In our DSBM sample, three SBMs described their relationships in negative terms, four in neutral or mixed terms and five in positive terms. In the following subsections we present data to exemplify each of these categories.

Not positive

SBMs reported a number of reasons for a non-positive approach by their heads. They include lack of knowledge about the SBM courses:

... there is a problem in that heads don't know what these qualifications are about, they do not know what the value of them is.

... it is slowly, slowly changing ... things are much, much better than they were four years ago, by a country mile. But even going down to NCSL ... during the DSBM, we had breakfast one morning with a group of super heads. I mean super big heads would have been nearer the mark and they were so scathing ... and arrogant. "Oh you can't possibly know what's good for a school" and ... you know we just sort of just looked at each other.

Others have suggested that heads might feel threatened by what SBMs are able to offer and do, especially after the courses:

It wasn't helped when of course they were going back to their school when the head was saying "Oh you know, what did you do?" and they told them and some of them saw the head's face drop when he realised he was being challenged.

One SBM reported that she felt her head was largely indifferent to her and what she could offer the school:

It very much depends on the headteacher ... it very much depends how the business manager is used or to what use they are put, but I don't feel that I'm used to my sort of potential ... it is a little bit disheartening. I think, "Why did I bother?" But I don't feel that the head has a grasp of what I actually do. It's been a sort of chipping away [of] esteem over the last two years really which has resulted in me thinking, "Well, OK, I know I've got more to give and I'll look elsewhere if I'm able to move on from here."

Another reported feeling settled in the school location but expressed concerns about the head's appreciation of what she was doing:

If I were younger I would be furious at my head's lack of acknowledgement.

Another felt that his exclusion from the SMT not only limited his ability to assist in the development of the school but that perhaps members of the SMT were dealing with areas that weren't entirely related to their skills in teaching.

The present view appears to be that the senior team which is the head, the deputy and the assistant heads ... basically are in charge of everything. They oversee the whole lot and so they take over all those roles, which is a little bit of a shame: I could have been useful for various things, particularly with the sort of strategic view on the money. We've got a site manager who does that under one of the assistant heads. So basically you've got a series of assistant or deputy heads and under each of those are aspects of site, the clerical, the ICT and the administration.

Neutral

We found fewer neutral comments and these indicate that SBMs were just getting on with the job or were being allowed to do so.

I think ... having a headteacher that you can work with [is important].

The head doesn't actually deal with the finances ... she just leaves it totally to me, I have to say.

Positive

Importantly, there were some very positive comments about relationships with headteachers, in which SBMs report being valued, respected, trusted and given scope to develop:

I am very fortunate with my headteacher. There are so many headteachers that, as you say, the one thing they would cut back on is [support staff] and ... they don't seem to think [about] who can support them.

My head is very supportive. I certainly feel that I am a full member of the strategic team in school.

Two SBMs reported favourably on the developing relationship with their heads and how this was having a positive effect on their work and the school:

I've got a head who's very fast moving, so things are constantly happening ... but I have a head who, you know, I get worn out walking beside him, because he's just dragging us along, and wanting to improve the school all the time, so we spark off him really, which is fantastic and I'm lucky.

I'm lucky, because he's very well respected across the county, and if I go to him with a problem, he will contact the people. You know I can stir it up so much, and then I'll go and say "Look, I've actually run out of time here to do it, or just haven't got the time and energy to do this", and he'll actually make a phone call, and it's very annoying, because you'll suddenly see things move, which is great, you know that he'll take on board what I say, and he respects what I say, and that's all I can ask for really.

*I am being more proactive, and he was great... he rang me back and said "Look, that's fine, and we've booked it on 1 March, and free up your diary." So you know two years ago I don't think that would have necessarily happened, and it would have been a *fait accompli* before I heard about it, so I'm being more proactive, and he's very receptive to that.*

This was reinforced by her views on participation in and membership of the SMT.

... the senior management team ... do you feel comfortable being on there? Absolutely.

Another SBM reported that as a result of completing the DSBM, she had been taken onto the SMT and was now clearly trusted by the head:

I think she's much more confident to leave things to me now. She certainly values what's come out of [CSBM and DSBM] in terms of my support to her. I think the level of support that I give her now and the information and advice is certainly much more than I could have done previously. Again it's this being aware, confidence issue. Things like me saying to her what I want to do, it's back to the old things, the operational procedures, performance management and all those sorts of things, and she values that, because (a) I'm driving it and it's something she doesn't have to, but (b) it's stuff that's moving us forward again, it's that constant self-evaluation and progression, and she's happy with that.

... I suppose the last thing ... on how much she values me is ... when I first came here, every school holiday she was in, and she's been in for two hours this week. Just came in, "Is there anything you want me to sign?" "Got any other bits?" "Right, everything all right?" "Yes." Gone again, and so the school's mine for the holidays.

Having considered aspects of the relationship with their heads, the next section considers evidence on how SBMs are working with increasing numbers of support staff.

5.6.5.5 Development of support-staff roles

The support function in schools is a growing area and one that is a central part of the work of many SBMs. For several SBMs, there has been an underlying attitude problem of the perception of support staff by teachers. This quotation exemplifies this and shows how SBMs are dealing with it:

... we're the forgotten breed really, the support functions, the non-teaching staff – and the first thing I did when I changed to business manager is our signing-in book. It used to be teaching and non-teaching staff, no we'll get rid of that, so we now have teaching and support staff.

In the interviews, 11 out of the 12 SBMs commented extensively on the ways in which they were increasingly taking a lead in supporting and developing roles and structures for support staff in their schools. This is an increasingly substantial part of the SBM's role. (Only one did not comment, as he explained that his head had restricted his role solely to finance.) From the evidence gathered, this development can be categorised into five main aspects:

- management structures
- training and personal development
- maximising possibilities
- attitudes towards support staff
- leading support staff

Management structures

SBMs are finding that with the growth in support staff in schools, there is a need for appropriate management structures. Some of our interviewees are further ahead in this than others:

I have an overall responsibility for them but each of them has their own line managers. Now, the structure is a little difficult, far too [unwieldy] for my liking really and over the last 12 months we've thought to try and put a structure in place that is workable.

We take the seven areas that are laid down in the CSBM. So, I have an admin manager and she has the largest number of staff under her and increasingly they're becoming more technical. And then I have a finance manager ... although he again has a staff who do ... an increasing amount of stuff ... We then have [a] human resources and training manager ... that used to be done when I came here by the finance officer – goodness knows how, I don't know where she found the time. We then have an IT technician who looks after the network and ... that's been taken away from the head of IT ... Because of my past experience I've taken on directly the health and safety role.

Training and personal development

With growing support staff in schools, SBMs are aware of and responsible for their training and development needs. This section attracted the most comment; some examples are presented here.

We've just had somebody in over the training course to do that and he's come back full of the joys of [portable appliance testing] (PAT). It was just beyond my expectation but nevertheless he's doing that ... We've found somebody else for a health and safety course to take that away from a teacher and to actually become a health and safety officer.

Now the support function has never been part of the school development process. Why not? We can develop as well as everybody else. So this year I've got to write the development plan for all the support functions and we're doing the equivalent of classroom observations with staff. So initially it will be me doing every one, and again I'm hoping once things settle down we can get that on the right route, but as part of their performance management.

There was no training budget for non-teaching staff then [but] there is now. The governors have been involved. So, we do have a lot of training going on.

Maximising possibilities

SBMs have been telling us of the varied ways in which they have developed the work of their support staff. Sometimes this has meant altering hours to improve cover, productivity or both:

We had one caretaker who ... started at 6 in the morning but nobody could understand why he went off at 2 o'clock in the afternoon ... I started to introduce rules where we no longer have a caretaker. We have three site supervisors who are in a rota, right from 7 in the morning to 10 o'clock at night and again there was a lot of critical thinking going on. I looked at their budgets and realised that they only had an income out of lettings of £3,000. But within two years we've got that up to £50,000.

In other cases it has meant ensuring appropriate staff are available and have the skills necessary for more flexible forms of working:

... other areas, painting and decorating: you don't need to be Van Gogh to be able to paint a school, the wall or all the rest of it. We have caretakers who can do that.

Our site supervisors are all trade trained, so again we've saved an enormous amount.

This SBM described his school as “a bit scruffy” and has taken steps to deal with this by taking on:

... a painter and a full-time carpenter and then we have this new thing called housekeeping. You know [she] ... is an excellent line manager ... and that's boosted midday cleaning.

Another experienced SBM was considering succession planning and retention of good staff:

It's far better if we encourage ... one of my finance assistants who is well on her way to becom[ing] a chartered certified accountant, and I'm hoping to keep her.

Yet two others told us of the often unknown and undeveloped talents that are often held by support staff. In her view (and that of other SBMs) this is often overlooked by teachers because of an attitude problem which considers support staff as lesser colleagues:

... in my humble opinion, we are still in the dark ages as far as senior management teams and teachers are compared to support staff. On our massive support staff (110) we've got lots of graduates.

We've had quite a few people who have done business studies degrees or we've got people who've been well versed in HR, you know. Certainly a lot of personal assistants who've worked in London, or abroad or something ... who are bilingual secretaries or whatever, but the teachers see them as the [non-teaching assistants] (NTAs), the head tends to see them as the NTA and I say to them, "But you don't know what else we've got in the personnel cabinet. Let's advertise the job internally, and see if anyone here applies."

SBMs are keen to lead the way in developing and maximising the potential of support staff:

We're going through a bit of a training process, a coaching process there. Again, it's one of those things that I expected I could absorb in those six months and that wasn't the case at all. In a way I underestimated the time that we need to do that but we're also focusing very much on how people can help the school to deliver a better service.

Attitudes towards support staff

As we indicated, there is an attitude problem in some schools about support staff. In some cases this starts with the head's view of the SBM:

My head wouldn't even consider me going into a classroom to just ... see what goes on, it's not your domain sort of thing and that's it, you're ... support staff.

Often this is a result of a misplaced view that support staff are not well qualified and are therefore, by definition, less competent, as this quotation suggests:

She is excellent in the way that she manages ... the admin. The admin are helping out with displays, but the teachers won't let go still. There's still a lot that they could let go. But I think the dichotomy is [found in the view] that teachers have degrees and are fairly highly intelligent and motivated and the admin staff ... they are degraded, they don't have degrees and they are just ordinary.

Some SBMs have taken up the cause of their support staff and are leading the way in tackling less-than-productive attitudes, as exemplified in this quotation:

I actively discourage anybody who treats the support staff as a lesser species, and I have been known to do the cardinal sin, which is bawl a member of the teaching staff out, and we had an instance about a week ago, when a member of the teaching staff came in here and was having a go at one of the support staff over something silly, and I actually went out and told her to leave the office. "If you can't speak to the staff civilly then please don't bother coming in here." It takes nothing to be polite.

Leading support staff

What has emerged from the interviews and the data already presented is that SBMs are increasingly taking a key role in developing and leading their support staff.

And team leaders ... I've started ... giving people some training and coaching in how to do a performance appraisal, how to set objectives and then devise a little booklet and then to send them off to do it and come back and let me know. It's very much a hand-holding process. A lot of TLC is going on at the moment until they feel confident and then I can let them out.

5.7

Summary

This chapter has presented data gathered from the evaluation of the DSBM in its pilot and rolled-out states. The course has been received very positively by SBMs.