

# 8

## Section 8 **Conclusions and recommendations**



## 8.1 **Introduction**

In previous chapters, we provided a detailed analysis of and commentary on the findings of the evaluation in relation to the research questions outlined in chapter 2. This final chapter provides a synopsis of the evaluation's major outcomes and conclusions, together with recommendations for the development of the BDP and for further research.

## 8.2 **Principal outcomes**

The principal finding of our evaluation study is that the BDP has been developed and delivered successfully, achieving all the critical success factors (CSFs) identified during the pilot phase of the programme. The agreed CSFs were to:

- train 1,000 SBMs by 2006
- develop and implement a SBM training programme
- pilot certificate- and diploma-level courses
- build a broad strategy for recruiting, inducting, deploying, developing and accrediting SBMs
- establish the school business management profession
- help, through these courses, to create a clear and transparent SBM career pathway
- enable BDP participants to address teacher and headteacher workload issues, freeing them to focus on teaching and curriculum development
- change the role in terms of leadership, management and administration
- provide professional resources and give SBMs the skills to access additional resources

Development of the CSBM and DSBM courses has met and exceeded the expectations of many candidates, their schools and stakeholders. The programme's innovative blended-learning approach – for which the BDP was awarded an international prize – has proved very successful, especially with CSBM candidates.

### 8.2.1 **CSBM**

The CSBM course has contributed very substantially to enhancing the confidence and knowledge of SBMs participating in the programme. The priority in policy terms of providing a large number of places on this course for SBMs from primary schools has been vindicated: these SBMs have shown that they have been more effective in raising more money on a per pupil basis than SBMs from other phases of schooling.

CSBM graduates report that they now spend a greater proportion of their time on leadership activities and management and much less on administration.

The CSBM course has provided a significant opportunity for SBMs to develop networks, both locally and across the country. This was encouraged initially in the residential sessions and subsequently by talk2learn. CSBM has provided a clear entry point for those wishing to establish a career in school business management.

CSBM has established itself as the operational-level course necessary for those involved in school business management. Through a collaborative accreditation process with the Institute of Administrative Management, SBMs who have successfully completed the course have access, recognition and membership of a professional body.

The most striking outcome has been the extent to which graduates have developed their leadership skills as a result of the course. Although this was originally conceived as an operational-level course, with a focus on key competences, our survey revealed a substantial number of SBMs who felt that they were operating as leaders in their schools and could cite evidence to support that assertion. This, coupled with SBMs' sense that they have been able to re-allocate their working time, is a very beneficial outcome of the course.

Over the period of our involvement with the courses, we have met CSBM graduates who have progressed to DSBM and are now recommending that administrative team leaders in their schools enrol for CSBM, thus providing a second generation of candidates. This provides significant external validation for the value of the course.

### 8.2.3 **DSBM**

The DSBM course was successfully piloted and rolled out nationally during 2004. We reported then that a market existed for this strategic-level course. Both demand and DSBM enrolment figures have subsequently confirmed this judgement.

DSBM was conceived as a strategic-level course and has been received as such by SBMs and those headteachers we interviewed. It has provided key insights into leadership and management of schools, and enhanced SBMs' knowledge and understanding of schools as organisations.

DSBM graduates have found themselves leading and supporting a growing number of support staff in their schools. This is seen as a recognition of the value of their new-found skills in this expanding area of school management.

Our impact survey revealed that over a third of DSBM graduates had had their job title changed as a result of completing the course, and over four-fifths indicated that the job itself had changed. Furthermore the survey indicated that they were now spending significant amounts of time on leadership activities, with over three-quarters of them now members of the SMT. This is a dramatic increase on the situation a decade ago.

Over nine-tenths of graduates indicated that that the course had enhanced their ability to operate as leaders, a finding confirmed in headteacher interviews.

There is an additional and important outcome of the course. There is evidence of some SBMs giving thought to their post-DSBM career development. Whilst there is now a relevant programme at first-degree level, some SBMs are now thinking about working for school confederations, extended schools, trusts, academies or local SBM consortia. An alternative is a vocationally-orientated course at a higher strategic level. The DSBM has enabled graduates to see beyond the parameters of their present professional world and to consider the implications of current and future policy developments. In so doing, they are seeking answers about their own development opportunities.

### 8.3 **Recommendations**

Course content needs continual development in order to remain responsive to policy developments and to developing conditions in schools. For example, since DSBM was established, extended schools, Every Child Matters, school meals, academies, safer recruitment and Building Schools for the Future have become central parts of the school agenda. There will no doubt be other initiatives in the future that NCSL must take into account in its ongoing course development.

Keeping the courses up to date is one part of building a respected profession. Another is a facility to allow graduates to keep their knowledge, skills and competence updated. We recommend that NCSL explore how this might be developed.

We have been struck by the growth in numbers of school support staff and its impact on the SBM role. It is clear that performance management, CPD and the integration of support staff into schools will become key responsibilities for SBMs. The issue of school support staff and their management, leadership and development, which increasingly seems to fall to SBMs, should be closely examined in the further development of the BDP's suite of school business management courses.

The success of the DSBM course has led some of its most inspirational graduates to seek further opportunities to develop and deploy their knowledge and skills. It would be unfortunate if, following the heavy investment in them, these very capable SBMs were lost to service in schools. They must be able to develop further within the schools sector, to avoid the risk of their being poached by other sectors. In any case further complexities within the schools sector, such as academies, trusts and federated schools, are likely to create a demand for SBMs competent at higher strategic levels.

We suggest that there is sufficient evidence from our evaluation to justify the development of a higher, director-level course, with limited enrolment and a focus on:

- HRM issues, including performance management and systems
- resource and asset management, including procurement and relevant legal issues
- leadership and governance
- organisational development
- strategic planning, with emphasis on financial and resource management

The overall issue of school leadership, coupled with issues in succession planning, suggests that a more integrated approach to the development of school leaders is a sensible way forward. Currently, future headteachers are trained through NPQH, other leaders through programmes such as Leading from the Middle, and SBMs by the BDP. Yet there are very important issues of overlap and commonality which could be dealt with by means of a more integrated approach.

A weakness encountered in our discussions is the small but significant number of headteachers who do not know about the BDP, are unaware of the benefits for them and their schools of a school business manager, or are unable to exploit the newly acquired skills of their own SBMs.

If such issues could be addressed within headteacher training programmes, it might enlighten more headteachers on the benefits and possibilities of school business management. The possibility of a more integrated approach to the development of school leaders should be explored, and cross-programme research, including participant surveys, undertaken.

## 8.5 Final remarks

Very positive outcomes from the CSBM and DSBM courses have emerged from our evaluation work. These outcomes are to be seen not only in terms of high candidate satisfaction and course completion rates but, more importantly, as evidence that the programme is having a significant impact in schools and, in so doing, making a significant contribution to the improvement of children's life chances.

NCSL is to be congratulated on the development of these courses and their successful delivery through external contractors, due in no small part to the dedication of the BDP team.