

# **Outcomes of in-school leadership development work: a study of three NCSL programmes**

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## Abstract:

This paper presents the results of a study of the impact of three programmes of the National College for School Leadership, namely Leading from the Middle, the National Professional Qualification for Headship and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers. All three programmes embody a blended learning approach which includes an in-school component. This paper focuses on factors within the programmes that influence learning from the in-school components. It focuses particularly factors relating to individual participants and to the school context within which they work. The paper relates the findings to previous literature on workplace learning and suggests a broader model of the factors that influence the outcomes of leadership development programmes.

## **1. Introduction**

England's National College for School Leadership (NCSL) 'provides learning and development opportunities as well as professional and practical support for school leaders at every stage of their career'. Its Corporate Plan for 2002/06 established an aim of putting in place the largest educational leadership development programme in the world by 2004 (NCSL, 2001). Among the College's range of provision are three national programmes that are designed to provide large-scale provision to develop school leaders at key stages in their careers. These are: Leading from the Middle (LftM), the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) and the Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (LPSH). Enrolments in 2005/06 were almost 6,000 for LftM, 5,000 for NPQH and 900 for LPSH (NCSL, 2006). Each of these programmes includes an expectation that participants will engage in leadership development activities in their own schools, but the nature of the requirements placed on participants, in terms of the tasks they must undertake, and on their schools, in terms of the support that they are expected to provide, differ among the programmes. All require some kind of in-school project or activity, but the purposes of these activities are specified in different ways. All also embody both face-to-face and on-line support processes, but again these differ, comprising variously

headteacher support, tutor support, co-coaching between participants, and coaching by a senior member of school staff.

This paper is based on a study of the impact of the in-school components of each of these three programmes. The aims of the study were to explore:

- the different ways in which in-school components have been defined
- how they have been used
- how they have contributed to participants' leadership learning
- what effects they have had in their own school context
- the impact of the projects beyond the life of the programmes.

This paper focuses on the outcomes of in-school components of the three leadership development programmes. These outcomes are elements of a broader model of the factors affecting the impact of leadership development activities that we have developed during this project. Following a brief description of the three programmes and their in-school components and of our research methods, this paper explains how our model has been developed and its relationship to earlier approaches to the study of impact. It then proceeds to report some of the key results from our study and to draw some conclusions.

## **2. Methodology**

The study reported here utilised two primary methods of data collection. First, case studies were undertaken of 12 schools drawn from all three programmes to enable the in-depth study of factors that influence project impact and the relationships between these factors. These took place in different regions of the country for each programme, with samples of four schools chosen from each region to give a balance of types of schools across the whole sample. The case studies involved individual and group interviews with participant(s) and others who were in a position to comment on the programme's and the participant(s)' impact on the school. These others included participants' superiors, peers holding similar positions and other staff for whom

participants had some form of leadership responsibility. The interviews were undertaken in the participants' schools and each one often lasted an hour or more.

Secondly, six surveys were undertaken: of participants from each of the three programmes, of LftM coaches, of NPQH heads, and of LPSH chairs of governors. These surveys were designed to enable the longer-term impact of the In-school components to be assessed on a broader and more representative basis than is possible with case studies. These surveys were undertaken electronically using a specifically designed survey programme and drawing on email lists provided by the NCSL. Such an approach enabled us to survey the whole of the large populations on these programme (apart from a very small percentage for whom email addresses were incorrect) and to analyse the data in a manageable way. It was hoped that the requirement that participants engage in on-line activities on each of the three programmes would mean that they would be responsive to electronic surveys. However, despite two reminders, response rates remained relatively low, as Table I shows, and this needs to be borne in mind in interpreting the findings.

**Table I. Survey Populations and Response Rates**

<b>Survey</b>	<b>Population</b>	<b>Responses</b>	<b>Response Rate (from actual population in brackets)</b>
LFTM participants	about 1600	245	15%
LFTM coaches	about 470	68	15%
NPQH participants	about 880	148	17%
NPQH heads	about 880	98	11%
LPSH participants	about 220	37	17%
LPSH chairs (postal)	about 260	42	16%

The focus of the study was on participants from LPSH, NPQH and LftM who completed the relevant programme at least 12 months prior to the evaluation activities.

### **3. The three programmes and their in-school components**

LftM is designed for those in the relatively early stages of middle leadership in schools; NPQH is designed for experienced school leaders who aspire to headship, with its successful completion a prerequisite for appointment to headteacher posts; and LPSH is designed for headteachers with at least three years experience of headship. All three programmes embody a blended learning approach that combines face-to-face provision, on-line support and in-school activities.

LftM begins with 180 degree feedback questionnaires which explore aspects of the participants' leadership styles. The results from these questionnaires are intended to support participants' reflections on their learning needs and progress, including informing their in-school work. The core of the programme is a series of face-to-face sessions centring on a number of Development Days which introduce key ideas about leadership and school change. The sessions are supported by an on-line component comprising a core of leadership materials, certain tools for diagnosing in-school situations, a leadership simulation and an on-line community. The third element of the blend is the in-school Leadership Focus supported by the coach (see below). The programme ends with a final session where participants present their learning to tutors, coaches and fellow participants and these outcomes are celebrated.

NPQH begins with an induction day and a contract visit by the tutor to scope training and development and in-school work needs. A period of self study follows, supported by four face-to-face days and meetings of candidates' Learning Circles. There are opportunities for discussion on-line with the national module discussion group, with personal tutors and fellow candidates in the on-line Summary of Learning group and access to special interest groups and 'Hotseat' debates. Candidates also make up to two visits to other workplaces and record key learning in a learning journal. A key element of the programme is the School Improvement Project into which candidates and their schools have to contract and the learning from which provides a key element in candidates' final portfolios. The programme concludes with school-based assessment, a 48 hour residential and a one day final skills assessment. Following successful assessment of outcomes from these various elements the final award of NPQH is made.

LPSH begins with a series of 360 degree diagnostic questionnaires designed to analyse participants' leadership styles and the climate of their schools. Consideration of the implications of the results of these questionnaires is a major focus. The programme centres around three workshops – the first three day workshop introduces the key concepts that underpin the programme, enables reflection on the results of the 360 degree diagnostic questionnaires and leads into a 'contract' to undertake in-school work to build on this understanding. In the remaining two one-day workshops participants reflect on their learning from their in-school work as it progresses. Peer support is provided by co-coaching groups of colleague participants. The on-line element is relatively insignificant for LPSH.<sup>1</sup>

The in-school components of the three programmes have rather different emphases. The Leadership Focus on LftM is explicitly designed to be a vehicle for participants to develop their leadership skills and capacities through implementing some kind of in-school change within their area of responsibility. The Focus should be determined at least as much by the participant's leadership development needs as by the needs of the school. The LPSH in-school work, similarly, focuses explicitly on the participating head's development as a leader and the impact of this on school climate in particular. This work draws quite explicitly on the initial 360 degree questionnaires that are designed to diagnose leadership style, professional characteristics and school climate. In contrast to these two programmes, the in-school work on NPQH is styled quite explicitly as a School Improvement Project with the achievement of effective change being foregrounded within the context of participants demonstrating their readiness for headship.

The key similarities and differences between the in-school components of the three programmes are summarised in Table II.

**Table II. Comparison of In-School Components**

	<i>LPSH</i>	<i>NPQH</i>	<i>LftM</i>
<i>Title</i>	[In-school component]	Development Stage	Leadership Focus
<i>Participants</i>	Experienced heads	Prospective heads	Middle leaders
<i>Prime mover in relation to entry to programme</i>	The participant	The participant (with head's support)	The school
<i>Contracting of in-school work</i>	With co-coaching group of heads (and the group's facilitator on request)	With NPQH tutor and school head	With in-school coach
<i>Support for in-school work</i>	Programme materials; facilitators; co-coaching group	Materials; tutors; tutor-facilitated on-line colleague group.	On-line materials; tutors; in-school coach and learning sets; Development Days
<i>Evaluation of immediate outcomes of programme</i>	'Before' and 'after' leadership style and school climate instruments; Day 5 review	Portfolio of evidence	'Before' and 'after' leadership diagnostic (second diagnostic optional)
<i>Reporting of outcomes</i>	Informal report to co-coaching groups	Assessed portfolio	Presentation on final day; abstract for on-line publication

It is important to note that the three programmes had very different geneses and emerged at different times. Consequently their underpinning principles are different. NPQH draws strongly on a competence-based approach to leadership development drawn from the National Standards for Headship (DfES, 2004); LPSH is built around approaches to leadership styles developed by Goleman and others (Goleman, *et al*, 2002); LftM has a less clear philosophical underpinning, but embodies within it a strong commitment to the concept of coaching both as a leadership style and a means of leadership development (Simkins, *et al*, 2006b). Each of these approaches is subject to critique, and the programmes of the NCSL have been subjected to a variety of more general critiques, covering such issues as their increasing predominance in the arena of school leadership development in England, their separation from more traditional academic approaches to leadership development (Bush and Jackson, 2002)

and the models of, and assumptions about, leadership that they embody (Gunter, 2005; Barker, 2005, Luckcock, 2007).<sup>2</sup>

#### **4. Conceptualising the Problem**

Assessing the impact of any leadership development programme is not an easy task (Easterby-Smith, 1994; Hartley and Hinksman, 2003; Earley and Evans, 2004). There are a number of reasons for this:

- outcomes are complex, difficult to specify in simple terms and may include unintended or unexpected consequences (both positive and negative) as well as intended ones. For example, impact may include:
  - sustained changes in the leadership behaviour of participants;
  - sustained changes in the school conditions that influence school outcomes, for example school climate in the case of heads and team effectiveness in the case of middle leaders;
  - sustained changes in teaching and learning processes and pupil outcomes.
- the most important effects are indirect, occurring through the leaders' influence on others who, in turn, can influence desired final school outcomes;
- these effects do not occur instantaneously – it takes time for learning to become embedded in changed behaviour, for leaders' influence processes to have effects on others, and for these changes to impact on teaching and learning and hence on pupil outcomes;
- outcomes of specific in-school projects are influenced by a number of variables involving the interplay among factors associated with the individual participant, his or her programme experience and the context in which he or she works.

For in-school development activities that are embedded within a broader leadership development programme these difficulties are compounded by the challenge of separating out the specific impact of the in-school work from more general effects.

Various evaluation models indicate the importance of evaluating the outcomes of training and development activities at a number of levels. For example, Kirkpatrick (1983) suggests four levels:

- the *reaction* of individuals to the training and development activities;
- the *learning* that occurs in various processes;
- the *use of knowledge and skills/behavioural changes* that occur for individuals as a consequence; and
- the impact on *organisational performance* – on staff and on organisational outcomes.

Thus, in relation to leadership development in particular, increased *learning* (self-awareness, knowledge, understanding and skills) needs to be applied to produce increased effectiveness of leadership *behaviour*, for example in working with others, facilitating change and achieving a focus on effective teaching and learning. It is these changes in behaviour that have the potential to impact on *organisational performance*.

This model is essentially a linear one through which an action – a training or development activity – leads through a series of intermediate stages to a final outcome, in this case, organisational performance. However, this concept clearly ignores key variables. In particular, it assumes away the influence of the environment in which the activity takes place. Guskey (2000) follows Kirkpatrick closely, but recognises this by adding a fifth element, namely organisational support and change. The importance of the school environment in influencing teacher learning, especially when this has a significant school-based element, is now well-recognised (Kwakman 2003; Reeves, et al, 2003; Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2005). Other writers have produced models specifically relating to leadership development which are more complex (for a review see Leithwood and Levin, 2005).

Our work on this and previous studies has led us to refine such models for evaluating impact. We have been influenced, in particular, by Leithwood and Levin's review of research on the effects of school leaders and leadership development on pupil learning

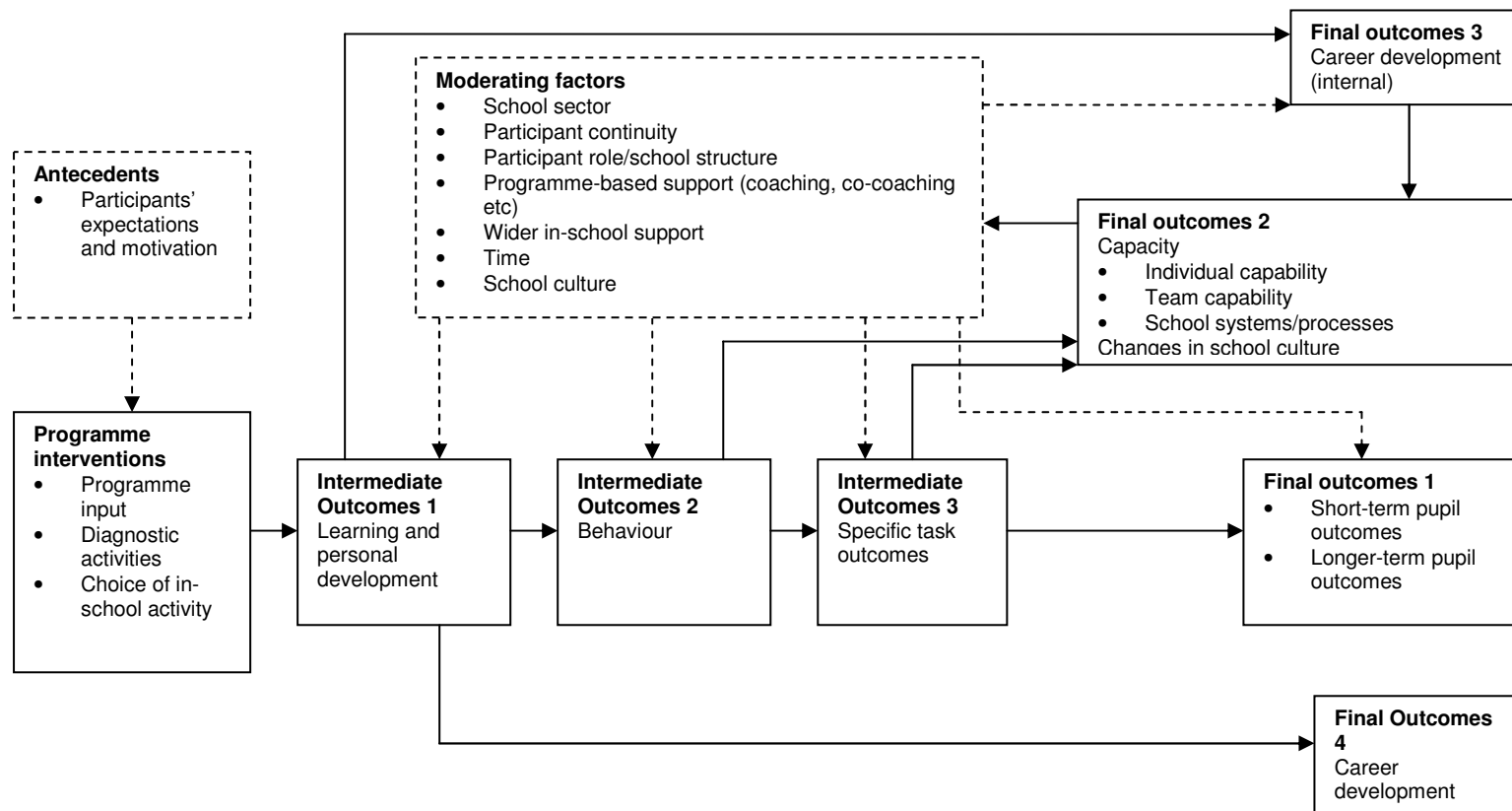
(Leithwood and Levin, 2005). We now suggest that the effects of leadership programmes can be modelled using a number of types of variable:

- *Programme interventions*: In the case of leadership programmes, these relate to the experience itself, including taught components and on-line support.
- *Antecedents*: Prior factors that influence the programme experience, particularly the personal characteristics of participants.
- *Final Outcomes*: The intended effects of the programmes, primarily relating to pupil effects and school improvement.
- *Intermediate Outcomes*: Those outcomes of the programmes that are conceived to be of a lower order than Final Outcomes but are pre-conditions for the achievement of these Final Outcomes. Leithwood and Levin call these mediating variables, but we prefer to term them Intermediate Outcomes since they have value in their own right, especially where Final Outcomes are difficult to assess.
- *Moderating Factors*: Variables in the school or wider environment that influence whether, and how, the Programme Intervention feeds through the achievement of Intermediate Outcomes to produce Final Outcomes. These factors help to explain why apparently similar actions have different consequences for different individuals, departments or schools.

Our study has led us to propose a set of relationships between these variables that are summarised in Figure 1. In this diagram, the solid arrows trace the possible effects of a leadership development programme through a series of Intermediate Outcomes to Final Outcomes. The programmes that we are studying potentially have three primary Intermediate Outcomes that are related to each other sequentially:

- participants' learning and personal development
- changes in participants' behaviour
- particular actions or projects that participants engage in within their schools as a requirement of the programme.

**Figure 1: A Model of Leadership Programme Effects**



There are then three primary Final Outcomes:

- changes in pupil characteristics (e.g. learning, commitment, behaviour, attainment)
- changes in the schools culture and/or capacity for future development
- participants' career progression, either internal to the school or elsewhere.

The degree to which these outcomes result from a particular programme depend on Antecedent and Moderating Factors. Broadly, the Antecedents determine whether or not a participant has the personal characteristics necessary to make the most of the programme on which they have embarked, while the Moderating Factors determine whether the conditions exist both on the programme and in school to enable the desired outcomes to occur.

A number of points can be made about this model. First, it shows very clearly the challenges in tracing the impact of large-scale leadership development programmes. The fact that the effects of such programmes (and of leadership itself) primarily have an indirect effect on Final Outcomes is now well-established in the research literature (Mulford and Silins, 2003; Witziers *et al*, 2003; Leithwood, *et al*, 2006). However, Figure 1 demonstrates the range of ways in which these effects can occur. Not only do they feed through Intermediate Outcomes, but there are also feedback relationships between Final Outcomes and other variables. For example, in on-going programmes, school effects can feed back to influence the experience of later cohorts. Secondly, as will be seen shortly, while the model is posited as a general one, programmes may vary in terms of which variables and which specific factors seem most critical to programme success. They will also vary in terms of which variables and causal relationships can be robustly evidenced.

The rest of this paper reports some of our findings on outcomes.<sup>3</sup> First, we will present some comparative data on key outcomes derived from our surveys. Secondly, we will summarise findings from our case studies. In each case we will concentrate our attention on final outcomes.

## **5. Outcomes of the In-school components: survey data**

The model outlined in the previous section proved very helpful in illuminating our data. The ways in which it did this will be considered further in the final section. This section and the next one will present key aspects of our findings. We begin by reporting the results of three broad questions that we asked of participants and coaches on all programmes: their effects on participants' personal development and on the school/college in which they worked, together with a question about whether outcomes had been sustained. We shall then report our survey results relating to three Final Outcomes: the enhancement of capacity for improvement, pupil outcomes and career progression. The next section will then consider how the findings from our case studies complement our survey data.

### *Two key outcome dimensions*

All the in-school components of NCSL leadership programmes can be considered to operate simultaneously within two 'frames' that reflect two key levels of outcome: the 'school improvement frame' which emphasises need for projects to impact on school performance, including pupil outcomes, and the 'leadership development frame' which emphasises the development of the participant's leadership skills and capabilities in areas that may have been previously diagnosed as areas for improvement. Programme specifications, as well as the results of our case studies, suggest that the balance between these two frames differs somewhat among the programmes. Bearing this important distinction in mind, we begin our analysis of outcomes by reporting the perceived overall impact of the programmes on participants' personal development and on the school or the department where he or she worked.

Table III shows very high positive ratings of between 81% and 94% for each of these outcomes, with the school impact figures rather higher for NPQH and LPSH than for LftM. These slight differences can be related to the nature of the programmes. The NPQH project places a rather higher emphasis on school impact than does LftM with its more explicit personal development focus, while it could be argued that LPSH participants, as heads, are in the best position to achieve an immediate impact.

Respondents were also asked about whether participants had been able to make a sustained impact (see Table III). While these scores remained high for NPQH and LPSH, they were markedly lower for LftM, suggesting perhaps that, in addition to the lower emphasis placed on school impact for the Leadership Focus, many of the Focuses may have been shorter term in their objectives.

**Table III. Perceptions of the Impact of the In-School work: broad outcomes (Percentage reporting 'very useful' or 'quite useful')**

	<b>LftM</b> %	<b>NPQH</b> %	<b>LPSH</b> %
Reflecting back now, how useful to the participant's personal development was the in-school work	85 (83)	88 (94)	92
Reflecting back now, how useful to the school or department was the in-school work?	81 (84)	93 (95)	95
Overall, the in-school work enabled participants to make a sustained difference in school	52 (62)	80 (77)	87

Note: Participant results, with LftM coach and NPQH headteacher results in brackets.

#### *Enhanced capacity for improvement*

The in-school component of programmes can enhance a school's capacity for improvement in a number of ways. It can enhance participants' own leadership capacities and hence increase their ability to influence, lead and manage change. It can improve the effectiveness of colleagues and teams through the ways in which participants work with them, and it can enhance a school's systems and processes. With the exception of the first of these – which should be an outcome of any effective leadership development programme – the nature and level of change in this area will depend very much on the nature of the in-school activity in which the participant engages. Participants, LftM coaches and NPQH heads were asked to respond to a number of items relating to this area. While the majority of these items related specifically to the in-school work, some were felt to be more appropriately asked of the programme as a whole.

Table IV indicates that the in-school work on all three programmes, as well as the programmes in general, was perceived by all parties to have had significant positive effects on the development of individual *leaders' personal capacity*. More than 80% of programme participants, LftM coaches and NPQH headteachers felt that participants had established a springboard for their further leadership development and enhanced their confidence and that the changes in leadership behaviour instigated by the programme experience had been sustained and built upon. The only exception was LftM where figures for increases in confidence and the sustaining of changes were rather lower, although still high at 73% or above. In addition, around half LftM participants were perceived as becoming more influential in the school; 81% of NPQH participants were seen as being helped in preparation for headship; and a third of LPSH participants felt that participation the programme had helped them improve their work-life balance. All these factors can be considered to influence positively the capacity of these leaders to contribute effectively to school improvement in the future.

**Table IV. Perceptions of the Impact of the In-School Work: personal capacity development (% Agree or strongly agree with statements)**

	<b>LftM %</b>	<b>NPQH %</b>	<b>LPSH %</b>
The programme provided a springboard for participants' continued reflection and learning about their approach to leadership	84 (92)	93 (84)	95
Participants are more confident as leaders as a result of their in-school work	80 (73)	79 (85)	92
The personal changes in participants' leadership behaviour that the programme initiated have been sustained and built upon	73 (77)	87 (78)	84
The programme provided participants with concepts and frameworks for thinking that still inform their approach to leadership			89
Participation in the programme has helped the participant to improve their work-life balance			35
As a result of their in-school work the participant has become more influential in the school	43 (58)		
The work the participant undertook in school has helped prepare them for headship		81 (81)	

Participants' work on the programme has been valued and recognised (by key colleagues) in the school	52 (72)	76 (71)	67
Participants' work on the programme has been valued and recognised by governors		53 (71)	65

Note: Participant results, with LftM coach and NPQH headteacher results in brackets.

As far as the development of *capacity at the organisational level* is concerned (see Table V), the changes in practice initiated during the programme were perceived to have become embedded in around 70% of cases of LftM participants, 80% of NPQH participants and 90% of LPSH participants; while positive effects on the quality of teaching and learning were appearing in around 65%, 80% and 77% of cases for LftM, NPQH and LPSH respectively. LPSH was perceived by participants to have had a positive effect on the work of the senior leadership team in 87% of cases while both LftM and LPSH were seen to have influenced school culture positively in many schools, although for LftM this effect was identified by far more coaches than participants, perhaps reflecting coaches' wider view of the role of the programme in the school. Indeed, LftM is the only one of the three programmes that offers the school the opportunity of strategic use for leadership development – in this case in the development of distributed leadership in a sustained way and also the establishment of a cadre of staff trained and experienced to act as coaches. In this context it is significant that almost 70% of LftM coaches felt that the experience of being involved in the programme had provided the basis for using it effectively in the future, 83% felt that it had had a positive effect on the school's approach to leadership development more generally and 84% felt that the coaching experience had made them more effective leaders in the school. Finally, from data not presented in Table V, a majority of all respondents stated that participants' work on the three programmes had been recognised by colleagues, and that on NPQH and LPSH had been recognised by governors (this question was not asked for LftM).

**Table V. Perceptions of the Impact of the In-School Work: school capacity development (% Agree or strongly agree with statements)**

	<b>LftM %</b>	<b>NPQH %</b>	<b>LPSH %</b>
Changes in practice that participants initiated in their in-school work have become embedded in the school/team	70 (68)	80 (80)	89
Changes that participants initiated in their in-school work have begun to impact on the quality of teaching and learning for some pupil groups	62 (68)	84 (78)	77
The work on the programme has had a sustained and positive impact on the effectiveness of the senior team			87
There has been a positive change in school culture as result of participation in the programme	39 (69)		73
The participants' learning set has continued to meet as a support group	12 (21)		
Experience of the programme has been used to help inform the school's strategy for using LftM effectively with later cohorts	45 (68)		
The programme has had a positive influence on the school's approach to leadership development more generally	(83)		
As a result of the experience of coaching, the coach is a more effective leader in the school	(84)		

Note: Participant results, with LftM coach and NPQH headteacher results in brackets.

### *Pupil outcomes*

It could be argued that, in terms of our impact model, it is least likely that in-school work on the three programmes will have had an effect on pupils, even 12-18 months after completion. The main, not insignificant, exception would be where in-school activities were designed specifically to have a relatively speedy effect on pupil outcomes. Nevertheless, participants, LftM coaches and LPSH heads indicated that in a large number of cases the impact on pupils had been positive (see Table VI). Programme effects on skills, confidence and behaviour were reported as 'sustained positive' or 'emerging as positive' in around 50-60% of cases for LftM, 85% of cases for NPQH and 62-76% for LPSH, with figures being highest for NPQH and lowest

for LftM. Figures for impact on pupil behaviour are somewhat lower, probably because fewer in-school activities had this particular focus.

**Table VI. Perceptions of the Impact on Pupils (Percentage reporting 'sustained positive' or 'emerging as being positive')**

	LftM %	NPQH %	LPSH %
Skills	52 (60)	83 (87)	65
Confidence	47 (50)	83 (84)	62
Attainment	52 (56)	82 (85)	76
Behaviour	39 (50)	64 (66)	62

Note: Participant results, with LftM coach and NPQH headteacher results in brackets.

### *Career progression*

The relationship between the three programmes and career progression varied. NPQH is the only programme whose explicit objectives are to prepare participants for such progression, in this case to headship. The primary purpose of the other two programmes is to enhance the effectiveness of participants in their current roles, although for many LftM participants, especially younger ones, career progression would be an expectation.

Of the LftM participants surveyed, 87% were still working in the same school they were in when they started the programme. Nevertheless, around two-thirds felt that there had been some impact upon their career development within school and just over half said that they had taken on more responsibility in their subject area, with primary participants more frequently reporting that the Leadership Focus had some influence on this. On a number of the items relating to career development primary participants reported positive effects more frequently than secondary participants and there was also a positive relationship between positive responses and participants' levels of motivation.

NPQH participants and their heads were asked what had happened to participants since undertaking the programme. Participants/heads reported that 35/41% were in the same position as when they began NPQH, while almost a quarter (24%) had been

promoted to headship in another school and a further 8/14% had secured the headship in their own school. A further 32/20% had changed position; for example promotion from assistant head to deputy head or being seconded to the LEA. No respondents had retired since undertaking the NPQH programme.

The results for this question when broken down by sector showed surprising results. Primary respondents far more frequently reported securing headships than their secondary colleagues; indeed just over half (53%) of primary respondents had gone on to secure headships, compared to just 5% of secondary respondents. The reasons for this are unclear from the data.

The majority of LPSH respondents (86%) continued to work as heads at the same school after completing LPSH. A low proportion (8%) became head at another school and 5% moved to another post or retired.

## **6. Outcomes of the In-school components: the Case Studies**

The relatively small number of case studies undertaken for each programme does not enable us to draw robust general conclusions about the nature of the impacts of their in-school components. Nevertheless, the twelve case studies do provide a rich picture of programme experience and outcomes that reinforces and enriches the results of the surveys. They provide confirmatory evidence that important impacts have occurred and that the nature of these impacts, and the factors that influence them, vary between the programmes.

The four *LPSH* case studies suggest that the longer-term outcomes of LPSH can be demonstrated to occur primarily at three levels:

- the participant heads' personal reflection, learning and development
- changes in the heads' behaviour and leadership style
- implementation of particular strategic tasks in school.

However, it is not unreasonable to infer effects on the school's capacity for future development, not least because increased headteacher effectiveness is, by definition,

an increase in capacity. There is also some evidence from the case studies that LPSH in-school work, where effective, can lead directly to changes in a school's culture as a result of specific actions taken by the head. It is much more difficult, and probably unrealistic, to make judgements about the impact of the programme on practice in classrooms and on pupil outcomes, although again where capacity and culture are enhanced improved pupil outcomes should follow.

Having said this, two points were notable about the 'stories' of the four LPSH schools. First, the three kinds of outcomes identified above were not easy to separate. Behavioural change reflects changes in personal constructions of the task of headship and is, in turn, embodied in particular leadership processes. Secondly, the ways in which the heads told their stories emphasised these elements differentially. Thus for some, the primary emphasis of the in-school experience – and of the outcomes – was the implementation of a particular change plan in school (Intermediate Outcome 3). We have called these 'task outcomes'. In these cases, the emphasis was on the implementation of specific changes in the school which would address particular issues or problems in ways which were consistent with desired behavioural or climate changes. For example, one primary head whose diagnostic had suggested that his delegation skills were something of a weakness focussed on distributing leadership more effectively in the school. The outcomes of this were described by the chair of governors:

*'Subject heads have been given definite areas of responsibility where it was a little bit grey before... continuity is now much better...[and] by spreading [responsibility] around it's improved the total package. Each subject co-ordinator fulfils the whole of their responsibilities, but [the head] also monitors everything that's going on... we've got the balance right – every member of staff has a responsibility and no one feels left out'.*

For others, although they took actions in school, the learning journey was much more centred on the personal (Intermediate Outcomes 1 and 2). These heads tended to focus much more on what they were learning about themselves and their descriptions of in-school activity was much less concrete, talking about changes in behaviour which might be practiced or exhibited in a variety of aspects of their day-to-day work, for

example in discussions with senior colleagues which embodied their new learning. For one of these, LPSH led him to realise that *'My performance was a personal issue...that was affected by some deep rooted aspects of my personality'*. He considered his work within the context of his whole life: *'Trying to get an upward route out of this, trying to control basics to get a proper work-life balance – a very personal plan. Leading to me being a better, more energised productive person at work'*. Apart from the personal impact of this, it led to productive discussions with his senior colleagues about the relationship between personal factors and leadership style:

*'The process created a much better understanding between senior managers about their own personal motivations. We had lots of discussions, looking at each other and seeing how different we were in what motivated us. I didn't need anybody else to tell me I was doing a good job. For me, just completing the task is the motivation. Other SMT members were completely different. This helps me to manage them and helps us to manage the school. We started looking at decision making in a different way and how you motivate staff in a different way....It was quite a culture shock to realise that I was having an effect on school work because my motivations were different to theirs.'*

Our case studies suggest that the reasons that the heads' approaches to their in-school work differed so markedly arises from two inter-related factors:

- the particular opportunities that the programme design, especially its focus on the psychological aspects of leadership and the central role of the diagnostics, provides for intense introspection by the participants
- factors relating to personal motivation and orientation that influence the degree to which a participant is willing to grasp these opportunities and use them to inform their work in school.

The four *NPQH* case studies also demonstrated increases in personal capacity. For example, one became *'more confident and clear about acting in the multiplicity of roles you have in a small school'*, while another felt he could now see how his behaviour *'fitted to a theoretical model which helps me make a mental note that when*

*one style is particularly effective I must remember it and adapt it for a future situation, and vice versa*'. Another, who had been charged with implementing performance management for teaching assistants, felt she had learned that:

*'...as a leader you need to have a direction to go in and have thought through that direction. When challenged, you may say you're sorry people feel that way but it's going to happen. It is important to be confident enough to accept people will not always be happy with you. You need to be open with staff and performance management needs to be sold as something interesting and expectations made clear that it will be seen through to the end.'*

However, our data suggest that longer term final outcomes of in-school work can best be demonstrated in terms of management systems and structures that were developed by the participants, then sustained and, often, formally handed over to suitable colleagues to take the changes forward. Thus, in one school the curriculum deputy developed a pupil monitoring system which he then handed over to his pastoral colleague; in another, a teaching assistant's performance management system which the NPQH deputy head participant had established was passed to a Higher Level Teaching Assistant; and in a third, the primary head undertaking NPQH entrusted subject leadership modelling processes to would-be LftM candidates. The contracted work in such cases would thus seem to be highly task focused and clearly bounded, but its outcomes could be very significant as some participants noted. Thus the project with teaching assistants was felt to have had important effects on the attitudes of this group:

*'Five years ago TAs just didn't understand if I asked them what they'd like to do. Even two years ago they waited to be told. As they became more skilled to consider options, then the questions starting to be asked were "What do we want from you now?" And now they're going into the future with questions about "What kinds of things do we want to happen?"'*

And the pupil monitoring project similarly had valuable outcomes:

*'Pupils had no sense of ownership of the targets previously but now see this as something which helps and want to be involved. At present I cannot be definite about its impact on pupil attainment but would hope that a more focussed approach to teaching and learning which has become part of the life or culture of the school would lead to higher attainment in due course.'*

As this quote suggests, pupil outcomes, as always, are hard to directly attribute to a single programme though the NPQH work was seen to have had strong effects on improved attainment in Key Stage 2 Science in a small primary school and achievement in Work Related Learning in a large secondary school. Perhaps a salutary lesson for managing change through in-school work - creating the visible 'small wins' - is to be found in a large primary school's social skills project. Here the targeting of a single class over a specified time produced measurable results that could be directly attributable, i.e. actions arising out of relationships generated by NPQH - in this case the NPQH participant acting in an enabling 'go between' role with a well-networked head acting in resource investigator mode on one hand and a teaching assistant looking for the confidence of achievement on the other.

The emphasis on task outcomes in our data on NPQH is not to suggest that this programme is wholly 'instrumental' in its operational project focus, just that explicit leadership concepts and 'the personal journey' of behavioural change are given less emphasis in programme input for NPQH than LPSH. The notion put forward by the head of one school that an LPSH-trained head working with an NPQH deputy produces a creative dialogue between the personal and the instrumental is an interesting one to consider when looking at the dynamics of multiple programmes in single schools.

For *LftM*, leadership learning and the subsequent related behaviours were clear positive outcomes of the Leadership Focuses. One participant said: *'I was not a very good listener... definitely my people skills have come on'*; a coach in another school noted that both participants in the school now showed greater *'empathy and understanding of others' points of view... [and] came to reflect much more on their impact on others and the need to manage through others'*. A third summarised his

learning about the nature of leadership: *'It has given me a big boost: dealing with teachers is like meddling with the dark arts'*.

We also found examples of successful task outcomes impacting on teaching and learning or school systems. Examples of the former ranged across assessment, accelerated learning, innovations in numeracy and literacy teaching; the latter included work on pupil monitoring and on links with primary schools. As might be expected, the latter were less tightly linked to pupil outcomes than the former. Thus the coach of a participant who had used ideas from the course to help him review teaching and learning in his department, commented that this had:

*'helped him solve a leadership problem... he felt there was a problem of standards of teaching and learning in the 6<sup>th</sup> form... he wanted to handle the problem sensitively and get a reasonable outcome... he did it very sensitively... and when he went back to the students feedback was very positive'*.

In contrast, a participant who had worked on developing ICT across the school noted that there was *'still quite along way to go along the road... it's very difficult [to identify impact on performance] if you focus something cross-curricular... it's out of your control so much'*.

However, in relation to LftM in particular, we also found examples of improved capacity for leadership and some evidence of culture change. For example, in one school some teachers interviewed suggested that, especially as a result of the more successful Focuses, colleagues were now much more willing to share good practice and more people were inclined to take responsibility for their own teaching, contributing to the beginning of a culture of transparency. There was less fear of recriminations if some initiative did not work. This reflected the leadership in specific areas, especially at middle management level. However, some schools, particularly secondaries, faced a dilemma here. The development of leadership capacity was moderated by the leadership infrastructure in place: if there was no structure for the

involvement of middle leaders more widely in the school, then this capacity was not able to be exploited.

It was noticeable that where schools had clearly articulated professional development, and particularly leadership development philosophies, they were able to integrate LftM into these in ways which had the potential to create leadership synergy. Examples included a group of secondary schools in a Networked Learning Community which was developing a corporate approach to LftM across the network, and a primary school which was establishing a clear progression route for staff from NQT, to subject leadership, to LftM as preparation for taking over core areas of responsibility in the school. The aim was, as the coach put it, *'to grow our own, to give those in school the opportunity [of development and promotion] ...even though that may be a gamble, an element of risk'* (see also Brundrett, 2006).

Where participants were able to develop their roles in the schools, this clearly added to this capacity. Thus in this same primary school LftM participants were being encouraged to lead small groups of staff ('developmental alliances') to address key aspects of the standards agenda. On a narrower front, in another primary school, the influence of LftM could be seen in participants' involvement in wider leadership roles in the school, with the head and coach noting that the group had been superb role models for subsequent LftM cohorts both within the school and beyond (the group had spoken at local meetings of deputy heads and national meetings for NCSL to discuss the positive outcomes of the programme for them). This established LftM as a programme viewed positively in the school and set up the development of middle leadership in the school.

## **7. Conclusion**

A number of broad conclusions can be drawn from our study. First, there are strong indications from both our case studies and our surveys that the in-school leadership development activities, such as those embodied in the three NCSL programmes studied here, have significant positive outcomes. Our survey data showed high positive outcomes in relation to personal development, impact on the school generally, the enhancement of school's capacity for further development and, perhaps

surprisingly, on a range of pupil outcomes. Career impact was also significant for NPQH and LftM.

Secondly, however, there were differences between the programmes in the kinds of outcomes generated. The in-school components of all three programmes operate simultaneously within two 'frames' that reflect two key levels of outcome: the 'school improvement frame' which emphasises need to embody activities that impact specifically on school performance, including pupil outcomes, and the 'leadership development frame' which emphasises the development of the individual participant's leadership skills and capabilities in areas that have been previously diagnosed as areas for improvement. In terms of Figure 1, the personal development frame focuses particularly on Intermediate Output 1 and probably 2. Any effect on Final Outcomes is expected to be indirect, and probably relatively diffuse, through enhanced school capacity for change. The school improvement frame, in contrast, emphasises Intermediate Outcome 3, specific tasks that are expected to impact directly and observably on aspects of the work of the school which have clear objectives in relation to Final Outcomes. The balance between these two frames appears to differ somewhat among the programmes, with NPQH appearing to focus more on the school improvement frame than the other two.

Thirdly, however, the balance between these frames in particular programmes is often more implicit than explicit, leaving considerable leeway for participants and their schools to interpret programme objectives in their own ways. Our earlier evaluation of LftM suggested that the ways in which the participants and other influential stakeholders interpret - and, where relevant, negotiate - these purposes has an important influence on aspects of the programme experience and hence on outcomes. Similarly, this study shows how some LPSH participants see the programme as an opportunity to implement particular changes in their schools, albeit using these opportunities as learning vehicles, while others see it much more as an opportunity for personal reflection and, indeed, introspection. Impact must be related, therefore, not just to the 'official' objectives of the programmes but also to how these are interpreted by participants.

Finally, the complexity of outcomes of leadership development programmes needs to be recognised and further explored. While it is accepted that the ultimate purpose of all expenditure in the schools sector, including that on leadership development, is improved outcomes for pupils, the routes through which these programmes contribute to such outcomes is often complex and challenging to map. Often – and despite the claims of many of our respondents that programmes *had* had discernible effects on pupil outcomes - the most important effects of the leadership development programmes which we have examined are on those factors that enhance capacity – individual awareness and attitudes, interpersonal relationships and team effectiveness, and school culture more broadly. At one end of this spectrum, some of our LPSH case studies draw attention to one outcome that is difficult to measure yet crucial for the long-term health of the school system, namely the re-energisation of very experienced headteachers. As one senior said of a very experienced LPSH participant: *‘He came back enthused for innovation.... and willing to take risks’*. At the other end, the LftM cases demonstrate the variety of ways in which programmes can contribute to the enhancement of schools’ capacity through their contribution to effective in-school CPD strategies that enable synergies to be achieved among individual leadership development experiences. Such developments feed back and enhance the future potential for distributed leadership and leadership development in the school. Indeed, it is likely that impacts on school capacity in its many forms are likely to be of greater benefit than any short-term pupil effects, even where these can be evidenced.

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**Footnotes:**

1. LPSH is in the process of being replaced by a new programme entitled Head for the Future.

2. For discussions of the evolution of the NCSL within an international context see a special edition of *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*: vol 32, no 3, 2004. Also Brundrett (2001).
- 3 Other aspects of our findings are further explored in Simkins, *et al*, 2006a, and, with particular reference to LftM, Simkins, *et al*, 2006b.

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