

NCSL's five-region internship programmes, 2006-07

Evaluation report

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NCSL's five-region internship programmes 2006-07

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NCSL five-region internship programmes 2006-07

Executive summary

Background

During the spring and summer terms 2007, NCSL's Leadership Network in five of the nine regions of England organised internship programmes for middle and senior school leaders. The regions were the East of England, London, the North East, the South West, and the West Midlands. The key purpose of the programme was to address imminent succession planning difficulties in England, forecast to begin in 2009. The intention of the programme was to provide school leaders with personalised leadership development experiences in other schools or, in a very small number of instances, other educational settings (e.g. local authority department). The internship normally lasted a week. As a result of the programme, it was hoped that interns would be better leaders, and leaders more likely to apply in the future for more senior positions, including headship.

The programmes were aimed at all school sectors: primary, secondary, and special. Over 100 school leaders took part. A similar number of schools participated either sending interns, receiving interns, or doing both. The vast majority of the participating schools were state schools but there was at least one from the private sector.

Evaluation study

The evaluation study has four overriding aims:

- ✓ To evaluate the impact of the internship programme on interns and, in light of this, provide recommendations for similar future projects;
- ✓ To evaluate the impact of the internship programme on participating schools and, in light of this, provide recommendations for similar future projects;
- ✓ To a lesser extent, to evaluate the organisational efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.
- ✓ Also to a lesser extent, collect the views of participating local authorities.

This evaluation report is principally the result of two separately commissioned empirical research studies conducted by a single researcher. The research questions were broadly similar for both studies. The evaluation process used three research tools: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (telephone and face-to-face), and focus groups.

The first study was conducted in London during autumn 2007 and was primarily a questionnaire survey of interns and schools involved in the capital's programme. The extensive questionnaire data were complemented by limited data collected through follow-up interviews with four participants.

The second study took place in spring 2008 and was focused on internship programmes in the other four participating regions (East of England, the North East, the South West, and the West Midlands). Interview, and focus group research methods were used. During this cross-regional research a number of perspectives were collected:

- ✓ Interns
- ✓ Headteachers of participating schools
- ✓ Local authorities
- ✓ NCSL Leadership Network Regional Leaders

Through the two linked studies, over 40 participants from the five regions expressed their views. The evaluation study captures the perspectives of a number of key groups: the interns themselves (primary, secondary and special school leaders), participating schools, participating local authorities, and NCSL Leadership Network Regional Leaders who organised the five similar but not identical programmes.

The evaluation report also draws on a study commissioned by NCSL's North East Leadership Network entitled 'Learning from a leadership internship programme in the North East' (Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007).

Key findings

- ✓ A very significant majority of interns stated that they were more likely to apply for senior leadership positions following the internship programme.
- ✓ Around 50% of interns claimed they were more likely to apply for headship following the internship programme.
- ✓ A very significant majority of interns believed they were better leaders following the internship programme.
- ✓ The internship programme was very popular with interns and all participating schools.
- ✓ An extremely valuable aspect of the programme was the opportunity for interns to have time with senior leaders, including the headteacher. Interns prized the conversations they had with senior leaders; the opportunity to shadow them; the chance to observe them in action.
- ✓ A key lesson they learnt about leadership was that context matters: it influences the style and practice of leadership. The interns learnt a great deal from experiencing first-hand a different context from their own and seeing how other school leaders were managing organisational needs in the host schools.
- ✓ Interns benefited from experiencing authentic leadership challenges as they emerged in the 'real world'. They also experienced practical and hands-on engagement with events.
- ✓ Host schools benefited from receiving an independent view of their schools from visiting interns; by having the opportunity to reflect on and account for their own practice; by staff being given the chance to share their ideas and practice with colleagues from other schools.
- ✓ In some instances, constructive and positive contacts between the schools continued beyond the internship and benefited the whole organization, not just the intern (e.g. other staff visiting the partnership school).
- ✓ Almost all interns believed that their host schools had been good or better at supporting their internship experiences. Similarly, all participating schools believed that interns had worked hard to fit in with the host school and to make the most of the internship experience.

- ✓ The affective dimension of confidence was key to people's sense of being competent leaders and, very importantly, being able to progress to more senior levels of school leadership, including headship.
- ✓ Evidence that NCSL's Leadership Network and local authorities (LAs) can work in partnership to organise high quality leadership development and succession planning in their shared geographical areas and, in so doing, provide local solutions to national challenges.
- ✓ Compelling evidence that some LAs view internships as a central plank in their succession planning strategies.

Key recommendations

- ✓ Continue with this successful programme and make it accessible to more people at different stages in their leadership development (e.g. preparing for first leadership role; moving from middle leadership to senior role; moving from senior leadership to headship).
- ✓ For different organisations (e.g. schools, NCSL, LAs) to consider how to make the internship process sustainable. This will include discussion and decisions about funding issues. However, sustainability is not exclusively about funding: coordination, information exchange, professional generosity, managing networks and relationships, and leadership are keys to sustained success as well.
- ✓ The selection process for interns ought to be a publicly understood and systematic process based on equal opportunities. Clear and appropriate selection criteria ought to be at its heart.
- ✓ The leaders, **especially the headteachers**, in host schools need to be uniformly clear about the commitment they are personally making to the interns. Expectations must be made explicit and key aspects (e.g. time with the headteacher) made non-negotiable. The focus on leadership must be clear throughout.
- ✓ Emphasise how important it is for the intern to thoroughly prepare himself or herself for the internship. Interns need to be clear about what they want to take from the experience and that they have personal responsibility for achieving these objectives.
- ✓ Time for focused conversation and reflection ought to be explicitly built-in to the internship if leadership learning is to be maximised.
- ✓ Consider whether it is appropriate for interns to be given an enquiry focus by the host school; something the school genuinely would like feedback about (e.g. an independent view on an Ofsted issue). However, the enquiry must not be too time-consuming and hence detract from the personalised aspect of the experience for the intern.
- ✓ More systematic forms of feedback need to be included. There ought to be a structured way for the host schools to feedback to the interns on their strengths and development needs; for the interns to feedback to the host schools on their experiences and evaluations; and for the interns to feedback to their own schools about what they learnt from participation on the programme. The latter point could lead to the development of the 'home' school as well as the development of the individual intern.
- ✓ Encourage continuing links between the intern and his or her 'home' school, and the host school.

- ✓ Encourage the intern to visit a host school with a different context (e.g. school size, pupil intake).
- ✓ Internship is a powerful and revelatory learning experience, which can lead to teachers significantly appraising their present roles and relationships. This can include a personal decision that they have outgrown their present roles in school. Therefore, all involved – schools and interns – need to act professionally and sensitively in such circumstances.
- ✓ Increase the profession's understanding of the role of confidence in career progression and, in practical terms, explain how this affective dimension can be strengthened in individuals. Explore how schools can create, develop and sustain cultures, structures and systems that promote confidence.
- ✓ For school leaders to have time interviewing and shadowing the headteachers, deputies and senior leaders in their own schools before visiting their internship schools. They could then use these in-school experiences as a starting point for a compare and contrast study of their host schools.
- ✓ In connection to the above recommendation, schools to organise 'internal internships' where middle leaders are taken off timetable to focus purely on leadership learning through shadowing and interviewing senior leaders in their own school. Similarly, senior leaders (e.g. deputies and assistant headteachers) to have a number of development days each year to shadow and discuss leadership with the headteacher. Both of these processes could be at the heart of the succession planning in the school.

NCSL five-region Leadership Network internship programmes 2006-07

Full report

Background

During the spring and summer terms 2007 NCSL's Leadership Network in five of the nine regions of England organised internship programmes for middle and senior school leaders. The regions were the East of England, London, the North East, the South West, and the West Midlands. The programmes were broadly similar and used common paperwork as a unifying feature. However, in keeping with the spirit of a federation of networks, regional diversity was evident. Hence NCSL's policy of local solutions for national challenges was recognised in this work. For example, one region aimed its programme specifically at middle leaders, while another took participants from both senior and middle leader positions.

Another unifying dimension was the focus on succession planning difficulties in England, forecast to begin in 2009. The general intention of the programmes was to provide middle and senior school leaders with a personalised leadership development experience in another school or educational setting (e.g. LA department). The internship normally lasted a week. The vast majority of internships were in schools. As a result of the five programmes, it was hoped that interns would be better leaders, and leaders more likely to apply in the future for more senior positions, including headship.

The programmes were aimed at all school sectors: primary, secondary, and special. Over 100 school leaders took part. A similar number of schools participated either sending interns, receiving interns, or doing both. The vast majority of the participating schools were state schools but there was at least one from the private sector.

The evaluation process

The evaluation study has four overriding aims:

- ✓ To evaluate the impact of the internship programme on interns and, in light of this, provide recommendations for similar future projects;
- ✓ To evaluate the impact of the internship programme on participating schools and, in light of this, provide recommendations for similar future projects;
- ✓ To a lesser extent, to evaluate the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the programme.
- ✓ Also to a lesser extent, collect the views of participating local authorities.

This evaluation report is principally the result of two separately commissioned empirical research studies conducted by a single researcher. The research questions were broadly similar for both studies. The evaluation process used three research tools: questionnaires, semi-structured interviews (telephone and face-to-face), and focus groups.

Research study one:

London:

The London research study was commissioned by NCSL's London Leadership Network and took place during the autumn term 2007. Two research tools were used: questionnaires and semi-structured interviews (telephone and face-to-face). The purpose of the questionnaires was to gather basic information across a wide range of subjects from a large number of respondents; the purpose of the semi-structured interviews was to gather more in-depth and nuanced information from a small number of selected respondents.

Questionnaires

There were four audiences for the questionnaires:

- ✓ interns
- ✓ schools that sent and received interns
- ✓ schools that only sent interns
- ✓ schools that only received interns

Four questionnaire formats were used – one customised for each audience.

38 questionnaires were distributed (to all 21 interns, and 17 of the 21 schools -problems with contact details caused this reduction); 28 questionnaires (74%) were returned. The return rate for interns' questionnaires was 66%; the return rate for schools was 76%.

Interviews

The researcher selected two interns for face-to-face interviews: one from a primary school and one from a secondary school. He was also keen to garner the opinions of senior leaders in schools that both sent and received interns. In light of this, he interviewed on the telephone a primary school headteacher and a secondary school deputy.

The quantitative and qualitative data from the two processes – questionnaire and interview - were then combined, categorised and analysed.

Research study two:

The other four participating regions (East of England, the North East, the South West, and the West Midlands).

NCSL's Stakeholders and Networks Group commissioned this four-region study. The study used a mixed method approach of interviews (telephone and face-to-face) and focus groups.

There were four types of participant:

- ✓ Interns
- ✓ Headteachers of participating schools
- ✓ Local authority officers

✓ NCSL Leadership Network Regional Leaders

There were five telephone interviews (two headteachers from participating schools; two interns; one LA officer); two face-to-face interviews (headteacher from a participating school; NCSL Regional Leader); and two focus groups (nine participants across the two groups).

The North East focus group enabled the researcher to elicit the views of two interns, the headteacher of a participating school, two NCSL North East Regional Leaders, an LA officer, and a member of a consultancy company commissioned to help organise and evaluate the North East internship programme. The West Midlands focus group enabled the researcher to hear the perspectives of an intern, two LAs, the headteacher from a participating school, and a West Midlands NCSL Regional Leader. The dynamic nature of the focus group process and the diversity of group membership enabled a lively but focused exchange of views to take place. This social process appeared to bring about new understandings of the internship programme and its impact. The focus group method may be a valuable tool in future studies.

Notes were taken at all events, and voice recordings were made – with the permission of participants – at the two focus groups and the two face-to-face interviews.

The interview and focus group questions for interns and participating schools used in research study one were broadly used for research study two. This provided a degree of consistency across the two studies. However, as LA officers and NCSL Regional Leaders were not participants in research study one, two new sets of questions had to be used for these groups. The data from these groups have added a novel and important dimension to the understanding of internships, especially in terms of system leadership, system change and sustainability.

The overall evaluation report (combining research study one and two data) also draws on a study commissioned by NCSL's North East Leadership Network entitled 'Learning from a leadership internship programme in the North East; (Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007).

The Interns

The pre-internship stage

Different recruitment methods were used by regions to select interns. For example, one sent an invitation to all NCSL Leadership Network members in its region, whereas another used existing local networks to channel invitations. It should be noted that the five-regional programmes had to be arranged very quickly because the time between funding being made available and it having to be deployed was extremely short. This time constraint had an impact on how regions organised recruitment.

Initial reactions

In research study one (London) interns were asked to think back to the time when they first heard they had been selected for the project, and comment on how they felt. The majority of responses were very positive, although there was a degree of trepidation:

‘Interested; excited; nervous; wondered how I would feel outside my comfort zone!’
(London secondary intern)

‘Opportunity to reflect on what I was doing at my own school... Chance to reflect on where I was at now and where I want to be.’ (London primary intern)

‘It was an opportunity I’ve been looking for. I knew there was potential in me and I needed to try and see how ready I was.’ (London primary intern)

Interns also emphasised the attraction of visiting another school and seeing another headteacher in action:

‘I was keen to experience “school life” in a different school and to spend time examining the role of the headteacher.’ (London primary intern)

There were similarly positive responses from interns in research study two (four regions), but mixed with some doubt:

‘Can I hack it somewhere else.’ (North East secondary intern)

‘A “live” experience... It wasn’t a pretend thing’ (North East secondary intern)

‘I have always been keen on training in a school environment.’ (West Midlands primary intern)

‘cracking idea’. (South West secondary school intern)

‘An opportunity that we had never had before’. (North East secondary intern)

For some participants in both research studies there was a sense of recognition. In other words, a feeling that their performance and potential were appreciated by their headteachers or LA, and selection for an internship programme communicated this:

‘Very flattered... It gave me a buzz’. (North East secondary intern)

‘Pat on the back [from the headteacher]’. (West Midlands primary intern)

One of the London secondary interns noted that she felt “valued”; this intern was one of the two interns interviewed as part of the London evaluation. The researcher asked her why she used the term “valued”. She explained that she had only been at her school for a short period and her selection for the programme made the intern feel that the headteacher was serious about her ambition to get back on a senior leadership team. (The intern had been a deputy headteacher in a previous school but had stepped down from this level of seniority.)

Although reactions were generally positive, a secondary intern from the South West strongly emphasized how the openness, approachability and flexibility of the headteacher in the host school are keys to the success of the programme. If such a view is correct, the disposition of the headteacher ought to be central to the selection of host schools.

Launch meeting, self-evaluation form, and pre-internship visit

Interns in both studies were asked for their views on three aspects of the pre-internship process: the launch meeting, the pre-internship self-evaluation form (based on the six national standards of headship), and the pre-internship visit to the host school.

In research study one all three aspects gained very positive ratings:

- ✓ Launch meeting (13 March 2007): All 14 intern respondents rated it as “useful” (four responses) or “very useful” (10 responses).
- ✓ Self-evaluation form: again all intern respondents found it “useful” (seven responses) or “very useful” (seven responses).
- ✓ Pre-internship visit to host school: all responses were positive, with five grading it as “useful” and nine as “very useful”.

In research study two, also, positive responses were expressed. For example, in relation to the launch meeting, one intern expressed his feelings metaphorically:

‘I think fortunately I wore a “big suit” to the meeting and I felt that I went in not filling it and I came out almost filling it and I think by the end of the project I could wear it confidently in the street.’
(West Midlands primary intern)

‘I’d enjoyed it and again it complemented the learning that I’d had before [completing NPQH].’
(North East secondary intern)

A primary intern from the East of England noted that the launch meeting in her region had been extremely informative and enabled her to come away with a research question for her internship.

With regards to the self-evaluation form, again there were complimentary comments:

‘It was useful in posing the enquiry... I was able to detail everything I believed I was doing and then look at the gaps and what I wanted to go and learn.’ (North East secondary intern)

Although generally well-received, there were mixed evaluations of the pre-internship visits, including a secondary intern who noted:

‘The meetings with the head didn’t really happen until we were there and I felt again this was a gap in the system we needed to be meeting and discussing beforehand and establishing that relationship and that’s why again in the feedback the involvement of the head at a very early stage is vital.’ (North East secondary intern)

A secondary intern and a primary intern in London expressed similar sentiments. Therefore, early and continuing face-to-face time with the headteacher appears to be a key aspect of internships and one that needs to be seriously safeguarded in future programmes.

Suggested improvements to the pre-internship stage

A number of interns noted that clearer guidelines about the terms of the internship were required. That is to say, interns and host schools (including headteachers therein) needed to be clearer about their roles, and the required outcomes of the programme:

‘Ensuring that people receiving the interns are clear on the role and there is perhaps some form of monitoring of their input so that the intern can maximise the benefits of the programme.’ (London primary intern)

‘A clearer recognition by the “host” school about the focus of the internship programme – which I believed to be about senior leadership and management, providing opportunities for the interns to gain wider experience of senior leadership.’ (London secondary intern)

As noted in the previous section, contact with the headteacher from the pre-internship meeting onwards is crucial.

The internship stage

The most valuable part of the internship

A large number of interns emphasised the value of spending time with senior leaders from the host school, including the headteacher. Witnessing other leaders “in action” and “in context” was key to the success of many internships:

‘Observed how [the headteacher] dealt with parents who were unhappy’. (London primary intern)

‘Speaking to another headteacher as an equal... I had a relationship with her that I could ask her anything.’ (West Midlands primary intern)

‘Shadow the head teacher who was honest and open at all times.’ (London primary intern)

Moreover, talking and discussing leadership with other senior leaders was another valuable experience:

‘Conversations with senior leaders about leadership.’ (London primary intern)

‘I was able to have quality conversations and spend time with a number of different leaders within the school.’ (London primary intern)

The latter comment was from an intern who was subsequently interviewed as part of the evaluation. When asked why these conversations were so useful, the primary intern said that she was able to hear about staffing and management structure, and senior leadership roles in another school.

A secondary intern from the North East mentioned that the internship allowed one to “float above” one’s own role and not be “emotionally tied to being part of a team”. Another North East colleague agreed with this sentiment and said that one of the most valuable aspects of the internship was, “that opportunity to observe in a detached way, not having that emotional attachment to the school or to people”. A primary intern noted something similar: she commented that within your own school you get drawn into the daily realities of running an organisation but an internship in a host school allows you to take a more strategic view of leadership. A London secondary intern expressed it succinctly:

‘Not teach! The observation focused my attention on so much else that happens in school.’ (London secondary intern)

Linked to the theme of time away from teaching and children was the sense that the internship enabled colleagues to reflect more:

‘Reflect on own role in own school... Reflect on own future.’ (London primary intern)

A number of other valuable experiences were noted in the questionnaires, interviews and focus groups:

- ✓ Activity followed by reflection and conversation.
- ✓ Budget planning.
- ✓ Taking on roles in the host school.
- ✓ Communicating with representatives from other educational settings (for example, Children’s Centre not based in a school).
- ✓ Intense discussion with a focus on emotional intelligence.
- ✓ Watching another senior team.
- ✓ Opportunity to observe in a detailed way.
- ✓ Day-to-day running of a different school.
- ✓ Leading a whole-school assembly.
- ✓ Sharing practice.
- ✓ Reflecting on work-life balance.
- ✓ Finding out about coaching.
- ✓ Joint observations.
- ✓ Attending meetings in and out of school.

- ✓ Discussions with the SENCO.

A theme in some responses focused on diverse leadership styles:

‘Learnt about styles of leading a successful school.’ (London primary intern)

‘Watching different year head management styles.’ (London primary intern)

Most important lessons about leadership during the internship

Interns were asked to identify the key leadership lessons from the week.

A strong theme was leadership styles, and leadership roles. There was, also, an emphasis on individual school context and transferability of skills:

‘What was appropriate at one school with one particular situation would not necessarily transfer.’ (North East secondary intern)

‘That a headteacher makes the job what they want it to be – there is no one role and one way of being a headteacher.’ (London primary intern)

‘The core of an effective leader can be felt, it permeates throughout the school.’ (North East secondary intern)

‘Acknowledge that leadership roles come in different packages and that there is not one fit for all schools.’ (London primary intern)

‘That leadership in every school is different.’ (London primary intern)

A secondary intern from the South West questioned whether it was easy to dress yourself in a leadership style simply because a context may require it. Equating a leadership style with a piece of clothing, her critique was this:

‘You can’t just put on a hat.’ (South West secondary intern)

A North East secondary intern commented how – on returning from the internship - she was now more self-aware:

‘Very much more conscious of what I was doing in terms of leadership where prior to that it was all automatic pilot.’ (North East secondary intern)

In addition to the interplay and complexity of leadership style, role and context, other leadership lessons emerged, including:

- ✓ Reality of headship.
- ✓ ‘Leadership is concerned with sharing a vision, being a strategic planner and developing staff to be accountable.’ (Example in Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007: 9)

- ✓ 'Connecting with people.' (East of England special school intern)
- ✓ Headteachers can still be involved with children and their learning.
- ✓ Centrality of interpersonal skills and empathy, while still being firm.
- ✓ Too much autocratic leadership results in resentment.
- ✓ Effective delegation.
- ✓ 'School leadership needs to be about ensuring fulfilment is a viable option for all students.' (Example in Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007: 9).
- ✓ Respect for other people.
- ✓ Seeing how things fit together.
- ✓ How to get the most from staff.
- ✓ Shared vision communicated to all stakeholders.
- ✓ Effective two-way communication.
- ✓ Holding staff to account.
- ✓ Building trust amongst staff.
- ✓ A good leader trusts.
- ✓ Time management and meeting deadlines.
- ✓ Organisation.
- ✓ Clear roles and responsibilities.
- ✓ How to be assertive but positive.
- ✓ How to see the big picture.
- ✓ How to be proactive.
- ✓ Individuals can make a difference but it takes a team to make it work.
- ✓ Senior leaders need to be able to identify leadership ability.

This final statement resonates powerfully with the central purpose of this programme – succession planning.

Personal lessons about themselves

The five-region internship programmes were predicated on the power of personalised leadership learning. The one-week development programmes were constructed around the individual needs of each intern. As

one of the interviewees stated, it was her “own learning”: she was in the driving seat; she was defining her own needs; it was personalised. Therefore, it was important that the research questions enabled individual colleagues to comment on their personal development, not just their professional training.

Unsurprisingly, when people were asked to list personal learning, a broad range of subjects was noted. However, there were some common themes. A boost to confidence, for example, came through in a number of responses:

‘The confidence that I could do this because I tested myself out.’ (North East secondary intern)

‘That I can do it! Seeing leadership in action helped me to gain a knowledge and understanding of how to lead, and a confidence that it can be achieved within my own career.’ (London primary intern)

‘I really want to be in a senior leadership role again; I have really “grown” in experience and confidence.’ (London secondary intern)

There was also a sense that the internship had clarified leadership and/or confirmed self-belief:

‘That leadership is not a mystery and is something that I could see myself doing.’ (London primary intern)

‘Realising that I am a competent leader.’ (London secondary intern)

In addition to the above points about confidence or competence, other aspects of personal learning were listed:

- ✓ I can learn fast.
- ✓ Wanted to step outside her “comfort zone”.
- ✓ Confirmed her passion for being a teacher; learnt she had a passion for being a school leader.
- ✓ Importance of analysing at school level.
- ✓ I want more experience.
- ✓ I plan and use time well.
- ✓ I need to develop delegation skills.
- ✓ I need to find a work / life balance.
- ✓ I can survive in another school (been in present school since she became an NQT).
- ✓ I can fit into a completely different environment.

For some people the internship has helped them to clarify their view of headship and whether they could do it:

‘That I want to be a head. I thought that I would be unable to continue with the areas of teaching I enjoy and the job would be too [much] paper work. But actually it is still about teaching just with adults as well as children.’ (London primary intern)

For others it has convinced them that they are able to take more steps up the career ladder:

‘Pre NCSL Internship I had considered that I was as far as I would go in teaching. I now find myself looking at different roles in school and considering an SLT role.’ (London secondary intern)

It was reported that in a conversation with his headteacher one North East secondary intern said “you shouldn’t send me out on these things because I had outgrown my role, I recognised at that point that I had outgrown the role of an assistant headteacher, that I was ready for a higher responsibility within the school.”

Clearly such revelations have an impact on the individual and the organisation. Powerful professional learning of this type has to be thoughtfully managed. The difference between the situation being handled well or badly could be profound for all concerned.

Performance of host schools

All respondents felt they had learnt important lessons about leadership, and themselves during the internship programme. This success was a result of many factors but arguably a central contributor was the effort made by individual host schools to make the project happen and happen well. In research study one nearly all respondents (13 out of 14) graded the efforts made by the host school as good or better, with 64% judging this to be “very good”. Responses from interns spoken to in research study two were similarly positive, with the majority grading the host schools’ efforts as very good.

The post-internship stage

Comparisons between the internship and other leadership learning

When asked to reflect on the internship and compare it with other forms of leadership development (for example, school-based events, LA courses), interns identified a number of differences. A factor noted by many respondents was that it was “real” and hands-on:

‘It was a real case scenario.’ (London secondary intern)

‘Having the real life experience was much more effective for me than sitting on a course and somebody telling me how to lead. I felt that I was constantly learning throughout the week from the moment that I arrived at school to the moment I left. Everyday brought new, unexpected leadership challenges and I observed how the leadership team successfully managed these.’ (London primary intern)

Linked to the “real” and hands-on theme was the emphasis on context-based learning:

‘Very different that you had the chance to be part of a school for a week. The opportunity to learn was huge.’ (London primary intern)

‘Yes because this was hands-on and you were actively involved in the day-to-day routines of the school.’ (London primary intern)

Others emphasised the personalised nature of the experience and the difference between the university-like NPQH and the “on-your-own” feeling of internship:

‘This was very much self-driven, once we’d had our first day we were in charge of what the learning was about ... in terms of quality of learning I was in charge of that and if I hadn’t a good experience there was no-one to blame but myself.’ (North East secondary intern)

‘The fact that you were on your own. The thing about NPQH has been that’s it’s, you’re in groups, and you’re in like your tutor group and it’s that day you feel like you’re going back to university, going back and seeing faces and that’s nice and you’re in that, you’re in a bubble really. This [the internship] was testing out all you should have learnt on NPQH in a real-life situation, so, I enjoyed it more because of that, because you were kept on your toes in more ways than one.’ (North East secondary intern)

The internship was different to more traditional professional development in other ways:

- ✓ More intensive and sustained.
- ✓ Whole week to reflect and observe practice of others.
- ✓ Party to all discussions, not possible in own school.
- ✓ More personal – planned own programme.
- ✓ Time to enquire, ask and learn.
- ✓ More focused than leadership development in own school.

Interestingly, two of the five interns spoken to in research study two could not compare the internship with other leadership training because the internship was the first leadership training they had ever experienced. One of these interns has been teaching for eight years and the other had been teaching for nearly 20 years. The intern with nearly 20 years experience reported that the senior team in her school had now realised that leadership development should start earlier. It is interesting to ponder whether there are many middle leaders, in particular, who have significant responsibilities in their schools but have never received any formal training to do it.

Better leaders and why

When asked if they were better leaders following the internship programme, 12 out of 14 (86%) of the London interns believed they had improved. Responses from respondents in research study two were similarly strong. Interns involved in both studies were asked to define in what ways they had improved. Again increased confidence was noted:

‘Gave me the confidence to go for the post [assistant headteacher in her present school]’ (East of England special school intern)

‘The internship has helped me regain my confidence in my ability to lead and manage others.’
(London secondary intern)

A primary intern from the West Midlands reported that he was now more confident to ask questions.

There was also the sense that new ideas had been learnt:

‘I have come away with new ideas to try and new leadership strategies to use.’ (London primary intern)

Another London intern mentioned how her headteacher was treating her differently since her return:

‘My head has involved me more in management decisions and I believe this is because of in my internship school I was in discussion with the head on many different management decisions.’
(London primary intern)

A London secondary intern noted that she was now more aware of how her teaching fitted into the whole-school picture, while a primary colleague explained how, back in her own school, she was more able to take a disinterested perspective:

‘I have seen situations from the perspective of the “outsider” and try to take myself out of the equation before deciding how to tackle different issues / developments.’ (London primary intern)

Similarly a secondary intern from the South West noted that she was now looking at matters from different perspectives. Apart from taking her own personal view, she was using an imaginative process to consider events from her present headteacher’s perspective and, in addition, the perspective of the headteacher that had hosted her internship.

However, two of the 14 London interns believed they had not become better leaders as a result of the programme; one of these was interviewed as part of the evaluation. She explained that while she was on the internship she did not identify things she wanted to do when she got back to her own school, there were no obvious transferable aspects. She also stated that as a full-time teacher, with no specific “leadership time”, it is hard to make changes.

More likely to apply for senior leadership positions

It is important to remember that the key purpose of the five-region programmes was to contribute positively to succession planning. In other words, to increase the number of school leaders ready and willing to apply for more senior positions, including headship. When asked in research study one whether following the internship they were more likely to apply for a more senior post, 10 out of 14 (71%) replied yes. Moreover, when asked whether the internship had made them more likely to apply for headship, nearly 50% (6 out of 14) agreed.

With respects to the likelihood of applying for more senior positions, interns spoken to in research study two were broadly positive about the internship.

In addition to these positive ratings on career progression, all of the interns said they would recommend the programme to a colleague. However, a secondary intern from the South West made one caveat: the

prospective intern ought to be clear why he or she is doing the internship; there ought to be a purpose to the experience.

Suggested improvements

Interns listed a number of improvements:

- ✓ Make the programme available to more people.
- ✓ Meeting of the intern, his or her present headteacher and the headteacher who hosted the internship.
- ✓ Follow-up sessions.
- ✓ Visiting more than one host school.
- ✓ Host school commits to the terms of the programme, including the headteacher setting aside more of his or her own time to be available to the intern.
- ✓ Reduce the significance of national headteacher standards and increase focus on personal targets.
- ✓ Intern returns to host school and reports on how the internship has influenced his or her own school.
- ✓ In preparation for an internship in another school, intern's headteacher and intern would identify targets that combine whole-school needs and the individual needs of the intern.
- ✓ More of a focus on the role of the deputy headteacher as middle leaders are unlikely to apply directly for headships.
- ✓ Longer induction period with host school.
- ✓ If schools are swapping middle leaders, greater contact should be encouraged between the two middle leaders before and after the internship.
- ✓ If days in host schools are not carefully planned, the intern can feel like a "spare part" with not enough to do.
- ✓ Opportunity for interns to meet up in the future.
- ✓ It would be beneficial for internships to be in a contrasting school to their own (e.g. size, intake, leadership style).
- ✓ More structured feedback from the host school to the intern about his or her performance and suggested development points.
- ✓ More structured feedback from the intern to his or her own school about the internship.
- ✓ A week is too long, better to spend two days in own school investigating "home" leadership and then spend three days in the host school comparing and contrasting the two institutions.

The schools

In research study one 14 out of the 17 sent questionnaires were returned; a return rate of 82%. Eight of the 11 schools (73%) that sent-and-received interns were returned; three out seven (43%) that sent-only were returned; three out of three (100%) that received-only were returned. The lower rate for sent-only schools could have been linked to the researcher having contact problems with a number of these. Three of the four (75%) secondary settings returned forms, while 10 out of 16 (63%) primary schools. In addition to the questionnaire data, there were data from two telephone interviews with schools that sent-and-received interns.

In research study two views were gathered from a secondary headteacher in the South West; a headteacher of a special school for 3 – 19 year olds in the East of England; two primary headteachers from the West Midlands; and a primary headteacher in the North East.

The pre-internship stage

Initial Reactions

When schools were informed about their inclusion in the scheme, they were positive:

I thought it's a brilliant idea, I thought what an opportunity for people, wished I had that when I was younger.' (North East primary headteacher)

'We welcome professional opportunities and the sharing of professional dialogue at all times and in many ways, and this appeared to be a more exciting prospect in that it offered colleagues here, as well as our visitors, a more focused and concentrated period of time to work together.' (London primary headteacher)

'I was pleased to learn that a colleague had the opportunity to participate in the life of another school for one week and share the good practice observed during the week.' (London secondary deputy)

'Excited! A well organised, funded opportunity.' (London primary headteacher)

A West Midlands primary headteacher said she was delighted, especially as it was linked to succession planning. Another West Midlands colleague initially had a practical concern about one of her Year 6 teachers being away from school but eventually saw the programme extremely positively: "very, very excited and also felt was just desserts for a teacher that was – is wholly committed to the school. It was about time someone recognised her CPD [Continuing Professional Development] needs". These two comments capture the emotional dimension to the pleasure schools were experiencing in anticipation of the internship programmes. The affective dimension was strong on this matter.

Taking a different perspective, a secondary headteacher from the South West emphasised how his school would ensure the experience for the visiting intern reflected reality:

'You're going to come in and see the inner sanctum, the inner workings of a school, and we're not going to play games, we're not going to keep you away from things.'
(South West secondary school headteacher)

Four schools noted the benefits for the host school from receiving an intern:

‘Opportunity for feedback from a neutral observer.’ (London primary headteacher)

‘Within five minutes of meeting this person [the intern] I really thought – quite frankly as heads do - we can use this person, we can really use her critical brain. So we ought to make the most of this opportunity.’ (West Midlands primary headteacher)

‘Pleased, thought it may help us have another perspective.’ (London primary headteacher)

One London primary school headteacher said in an interview that he had valued the conversation with the intern visiting his school because she provided an external perspective with “no beef; no agenda”. This was in comparison to other visitors who tend to have an agenda and bring “baggage”.

However, unsurprisingly with a new programme, some caution was mixed with the enthusiasm:

“Enthused by the opportunity but not entirely sure about what it was all about.”
(secondary assistant headteacher)

“The interns are] going to be watching me.” (East of England special school headteacher)

A primary headteacher in the North East was initially concerned how his young staff may feel about someone from another school visiting and looking at their practice.

Selection Process

A number of selection processes were used to choose an intern:

- ✓ Internally advertised/applications/selection.
- ✓ LA identifying a suitable candidate and then approaching the school.
- ✓ Announcement to all staff but the headteacher already had someone in mind.
- ✓ Senior leaders used their knowledge of colleagues to select. At least, one headteacher used performance management information as part of this process.
- ✓ Colleagues who had completed “Leading from the Middle” (NCSL programme for middle leaders) were eligible.
- ✓ Self-selection.
- ✓ Colleagues recently appointed to the senior team.
- ✓ Volunteers from curriculum leaders and leadership team, and then nominated.
- ✓ Longest serving staff who deserved the opportunity; who would benefit from the programme; and who would be enthusiastic.
- ✓ Colleague who would personally benefit and who was keen to move into a senior leadership role.

Launch meeting, self-evaluation form, and pre-internship visit

London schools were asked to grade the usefulness of three pre-internship stage processes:

- ✓ Of the nine schools that attended the launch meeting, all of them graded it “useful” (44%) or “very useful” (56%).
- ✓ Only the send-receive schools were asked to comment on the pre-internship visit. Of these, all schools found it “useful” (25%) or “very useful” (75%).
- ✓ Of the five senior leaders who were involved in helping the intern complete the self-evaluation form, two found it “useful” (40%) and three found it “very useful” (60%).

All four regions in research study two held some form of launch meeting. They were generally judged as useful.

Regions used the self-evaluation forms but its centrality varied between regions, and between schools in a single region. That is to say, people used them flexibly.

Pre-internship visits were common across the four regions. Most schools organized them and found them useful:

“It was very useful This is someone coming into my school and I want them to have – for every reason – I want them to have a real quality experience.” (West Midlands primary headteacher)

A primary headteacher in the North East thought the session at his school went “very well”. He thought the success was possibly down to a number of reasons: the school was well-organized for the visit; the visiting intern was well-prepared; the people involved got on well at a personal level; and the visiting intern wanted to give something to the host school and not just be on the receiving end of development.

However, at least one school did not arrange a pre-internship visit at all.

Suggested improvements

There were very few suggestions for change but one respondent noted:

“More details up front about expectations. I didn’t have specific details until pre-internship meeting. Could have done with them at an earlier stage of deciding who to send and whether to participate”.
(secondary assistant headteacher)

Another respondent (London primary headteacher) commented that perhaps a summary of the intern’s previous experiences may have been helpful.

A headteacher in the East of England said that time to look at learning objectives of interns would be an improvement.

The internship stage

Difficulties and workload linked to the internship

The only common problem in the London schools was covering classes: eight schools noted this subject. Generally, the programme seemed straightforward. The NCSL funding may have helped here. (NCSL Leadership Network regions provided funding to help with associated costs, especially cover.)

However, a number of questionnaire respondents noted “significant” (six out of 11: 55%) or “very significant” (one out of 11: 9%) increases in workload experienced by the host schools. The researcher asked one of the interviewees about what contributed to workload. The interviewee, a secondary school deputy headteacher, noted use of deputy headteacher time and preparing “full on” leadership experiences for a week.

Schools spoken to in research study two expressed far less concern about workload. A secondary headteacher from the South West said the workload was, “negligible because the person was expected to join and work alongside us.” A North East primary headteacher said he simply deferred certain things because of it.

However, a West Midlands headteacher had a specific concern about the programme, as it was one of her Year 6 teachers who would be out of school. Again a more specific concern was mentioned by a North East primary headteacher who was going to lose the school deputy on the internship.

Efforts made by interns

London schools were asked to comment on the effort made by interns to fit in with the school and get the most from the experience. This was similar to a question asked of interns about their host schools’ attempts to provide a successful experience. The answers to both questions were positive: 100% of schools graded the effort made by interns as “significant” or “very significant”, with 91% choosing the top grade available; and 93% (13 out of 14) of interns judged their host schools as “good” or “very good”, with 64% selecting the top grade available.

Therefore, both interns and schools worked hard to make the London programme a success.

From research study two responses were similarly positive

“When the intern came here there was no, there was no edge to what she wanted and what we could deliver. There was no conflict of interest. There was, there was a real sense that we both knew what we were talking about.” (South West secondary headteacher)

Benefits to the host school

A number of host schools noted the usefulness of having feedback from the intern:

“But when you have someone coming in who said why do you do it that way, we learnt things from her.” (South West secondary headteacher)

“Very interesting having someone observe an SLT meeting and then give feedback!”
(London secondary deputy headteacher)

A North East primary headteacher explained that the partnership between his school and the intern's school is continuing and involving a number of other staff:

"They [host school teachers] were very interested in the colleague's [the intern's] school They're gaining because we've already got arranged visits between members of staff." (North East primary headteacher)

A West Midlands primary headteacher explained that an intern to her school believed that the amount of support offered by teaching assistants was having an adverse effect on the pupils' independence. As a consequence of this assessment, staff from the mainstream host school visited the intern's special school. This partnership continues.

A primary headteacher from the North East asked the visiting intern to feedback on a development point made at the last Ofsted inspection and found the resulting view useful. He candidly reported: "I found out things I did not know." (North East primary headteacher)

Three respondents commented on the self-reflection caused by the visit:

"Made us think about what we do and why." (London secondary assistant headteacher)

"What was a great thing here was that, I think, everybody in the team benefited... and I think that for them [senior team members] it made them think [about] what they were doing." (South West secondary headteacher)

"All [those members of the SLT involved] commented that the experience had been enjoyable and a useful opportunity to reflect on their own and the school's practice." (London secondary assistant headteacher)

A primary headteacher noted the opportunities it provided for the host school's middle leaders:

"It gave middle leaders a chance to articulate in a very focussed sense the nuts and bolts of the demands and expectations of their role and also led to some deeper discussion about the curriculum and its delivery ... It was an affirming experience for the middle leaders in that their ideas, aspirations and indeed current practice were made public, discussed and shared with colleagues beyond their own school community." (London primary headteacher)

During one of the London interviews it was clear that a school's succession planning had benefited from the programme. The deputy headteacher in charge of the internship process in his school reported that the returning intern had applied for and secured a more senior post, involving whole school responsibilities. He said he was not convinced she would have ever applied for this post if it had not been for the internship experience. Her promotion has led to benefits for a number of staff, four including the intern.

The post-internship stage

Comparisons between the internship and other leadership learning

A number of respondents emphasised the personalised aspect of the internship programme:

"Greater level of self-direction." (London primary headteacher)

"Highly tailored to the individual's needs." (London primary headteacher)

Others focused on the experience being longer and deeper than other forms of leadership learning:

“To my knowledge, this was the first time someone from this school has been given the opportunity to spend a week in another school. Until this time staff have only spent a day in another school.”
(London secondary deputy)

“A deeper, often profound learning experience.” (London primary headteacher)

A special school headteacher from the East of England emphasised the significance of the experience being for a whole week. She believed a week enabled interns to switch off from their day-to-day responsibilities and that traditional courses did not allow this to happen.

A secondary school respondent highlighted the active engagement required of the programme:

“Much more “real and hands on”. Intern had to be proactive.” (London secondary assistant headteacher)

In sum, the main differences between the internship and other professional learning were personalisation, depth and length of engagement, and the reality and practicality of the experience.

Better leaders and why

Out of the 11 London schools that responded to the question about the leadership effectiveness of interns on their return, seven (64%) graded their colleagues as better leaders following their internships. Interestingly, 86% of interns evaluated themselves as better leaders. This discrepancy may be explained by the fact that two of the 11 schools noted that they did not know if interns were better leaders, not that their returning interns were not better leaders. In other words, they had selected the “Don’t Know” option.

When schools were asked why they thought their colleagues were better leaders, a range of reasons was given. Again the affective dimension of confidence was mentioned:

“Increased confidence” (London primary headteacher)

“More confident to take a lead in meetings and discussions.” (London primary headteacher)

Broadening of both the intern’s experience and their viewpoints were noted by a number of respondents:

“She is an excellent leadership prospect and the internship broadened her experience.”
(London primary headteacher)

“She came back with a full appreciation of what the nature of the job was.”
(South West secondary headteacher)

“Greater awareness of whole school issues and how decisions are made and why.”
(London secondary deputy)

“More self-confident with a wider perspective.” (London secondary assistant headteacher)

Similarly, a primary school headteacher from the West Midlands noted that her colleague now had a broader perspective.

Furthermore, increases in imagination, creativity and teamwork were noted, as were a greater appreciation of the work of their own schools, and a better understanding of leadership and management.

More likely to apply for senior leadership positions, including headships

In London six out of 11 (55%) responding schools thought their interns were more likely to apply for a more senior position. Of this group of 11 schools, two believed interns were less likely and two believed interns' ambitions were unchanged. This compares with 74% of interns who believed they were more likely to try for the next rung of the career ladder.

Only three out of 11 schools (27%) judged that the interns from their schools were more likely to apply for headship. This is 16% less than the percentage of interns who believed they were more likely to apply for headship following the internship programme. However, the use of percentages may make the difference seem more dramatic than it was: the number of intern respondents who believed they were more likely to apply for headship was six out of 14, the number of schools believing application for headship more likely was four out of 11.

In research study two the vast majority of headteachers thought their colleagues were more likely to apply for more senior positions.

"It has whetted her appetite, she will go for headship." (South West secondary headteacher)

Attractiveness of the internship programme

All London schools that sent interns stated that they would send interns again. Moreover, all schools that received interns stated that they would like to receive interns in the future. Also, those schools that did not send interns this time would be keen to in the future; similarly, all those who did not receive interns on this occasion would do so if given the opportunity. Across the other four regions all headteachers said they would be willing to take part in internship programmes in the future. Therefore, the attractiveness of the programme is evident.

Suggested improvements and safeguards

Two of the 11 London schools noted that it might be better for the five intern days to be spread across two weeks with reflection time in-between. However, a special school headteacher from the East of England took a contrary view and argued for a whole-week approach. Below are other suggestions made across the five regions:

- ✓ Do not make it too bureaucratic.
- ✓ Ensure interns have a high level of commitment to make it work.
- ✓ Checks on the quality of the internships.
- ✓ More information in advance of the programme.
- ✓ Fewer unrealistic expectations on the headteacher (examples not included).
- ✓ Withdraw requirement for intern to lead an assembly.

- ✓ Timing of internships.
- ✓ Opportunity to follow-up the initial internship with another visit but this time with a narrower focus.
- ✓ Internship in a similar educational establishment so that there would be greater opportunities for the sharing of good practice, and the continuing of links with the establishment.
- ✓ Only fund schools if they are willing to send and receive interns.
- ✓ More focus and exploration of leadership styles. (However, the respondent noted that this form of analysis might be better placed in a more advanced leadership programme.)

One of the respondents, a primary school headteacher, described a linked programme that she is considering in her school:

‘As the hosting headteacher it has provided an already successful model to replicate an in-house internship programme. It has given me the confidence to develop middle leaders with a view to “stepping up” and me “letting go”.’

The researcher informally shared this idea with London school leaders and received a positive response. There is potential for this in-school approach to become a significant and practical aspect of succession planning.

Local authorities

Four LA officers were spoken to during research study two: one officer from the East of England, two from the West Midlands and one from the North East. In all three regions their involvement in the internship programmes was strong and positive. (No LA views were canvassed in research study one.)

East of England

In the East of England the NCSL Regional Leader had established four area hubs for the internship programme; one of the hubs was specifically focused on secondary schools. The organizer of this hub provided feedback to the research study. His main responsibility is to lead a secondary school leadership academy in his LA. The NCSL Regional Leader had contacted him in 2007 and explained the internship proposal and he had agreed to a brokering/support role for his Authority. Eventually, 14 secondary interns took part in the project and approximately 10 schools provided placements.

When asked about the response of interns to the programme, the LA officer said it was “overwhelmingly positive” and that some of the comments on evaluation sheets were very powerful. He said it provided interns with opportunities for “getting close to leadership”. He remarked on the openness of some of the headteachers during the process and that the shadowing of the headteachers had been a key aspect of the programme. He also commented on the significance of spending a sustained period of time in another school. Participating schools were similarly positive about the programme. They welcomed the interns providing new perspectives on the work of their schools.

The obvious success of the programme and the fact that it had increased people’s interest in going on to headship, resulted in the continuation of the programme into 2007/08. However, the LA itself is now funding it. As it was to be a central plank of the LA succession planning strategy for secondary schools, an

NCSL grant for succession planning work may be helping to fund the project. Apart from this targeted impact, the LA officer said it had encouraged more people to become involved with the LA leadership academy *per se*. The only downside was the significant distances some interns had to travel in this large and rural LA.

With respect to internships, the LA officer was asked what role the NCSL could play in the future. He mentioned two things. First, to collect examples of good practice nationally and then share them with LAs. Second, provide funding for this work.

North East

In the North East the Regional Leader liaised closely with an LA officer from one of the 12 LAs in the area (only one North East LA was directly involved in organizing the programme and, in addition, one of the diocese groups played a part).

The LA officer explained why she was interested in her LA taking part in the programme:

“Because it’s my responsibility to develop leadership in the Authority and you’re always looking for new roots to do it and this sounded like a great opportunity.” (North East LA officer)

She explained that because there was very short notice of the programme in 2006/07, she had used her knowledge and the knowledge of LA advisers to identify people, rather than her preferred approach, which is to invite all schools to nominate colleagues:

“We looked at people who we were aware of were on the cusp of or already looking for move to headship so actually what we did was very, very quickly... come on let’s think who do we know at that level, who’s applying already but, equally, who do we think might possibly need a nudge.” (North East LA officer)

However, in the internship programme for 2007-08 – organised by the LA itself, in collaboration with the NCSL North East Leadership Network - she has written to all schools about the opportunity and has established selection criteria for inclusion. She has also set up a group of LA senior school leaders to help with the process. Interestingly, a member of this team was at the focus group session in the North East and commented on the criteria:

“One of those criteria was that they had to show commitment to leadership training of some sort because we felt that if you were not thinking about leadership and had [not] actively sought some professional development in that area, then this was just going to be a week out of school.”

Therefore, with better lead-in times, a broader, more inclusive and more sophisticated model had been created; one based on clear selection criteria.

The programme for 2007-08 had only been possible because of the NCSL succession planning grant. This money was key:

“If I don’t have that grant, I can’t do it.” (North East LA officer)

She had chosen to use the present succession planning funding in a dynamic way:

“Let’s really get good quality teachers in our Authority some high quality CPD at high level leadership and encourage them to start to look for headship. So I decided actually that what we’d do for the

programme, what I'd use the money for – and I've used the bulk of the money – for supporting interns.”

She is working with NCSL's North East Leadership Network to help provide these placements and then using the LA succession planning grant to top-up, very significantly, the funding provided to schools by NCSL's Leadership Network. She has made internship the heart of the LA's succession planning strategy. It could be argued that this is a clear indicator of how successful she deemed the internship programme during the previous academic year (2006-07).

West Midlands

As noted earlier, the short notice provided for organising NCSL Leadership Network projects in 2006-07 had an impact on the way they were implemented. In the West Midlands the Regional Leader very speedily arranged 30 internships using contacts in her own LA (referred to in the research as Local Authority A) and the contacts of a Leadership Network member in a neighbouring authority (Local Authority B). The Leadership Network member is an LA officer with particular responsibilities for professional learning and development. This is a practical example of how the extension of Leadership Network membership to LA colleagues has had a beneficial impact on school leaders, LAs, and NCSL. Synergy is at play.

At the time of the evaluation research the NCSL Regional Leader had stood down from her headship to take up a position as an LA officer, while still continuing part-time in her NCSL role. At the focus group she was joined by two West Midlands' colleagues: one a primary school leader; the other was the LA officer who had helped organize the internship programme 2006-07. Therefore, two of the participants were LA officers. This provided a strong LA perspective for the research.

The officer from local authority B explained her approach to selection:

“I decided to whiz a letter out to heads wrote out to heads explained, you know, what we were doing and asked them to send back nominations.” (local authority B officer)

As with LA colleagues in the North East and the East of England, this officer was involved with her authority's approach to succession planning:

“I was already going to the national meetings where the succession planning strategy was being talked about. So I had that on one side. And then joining the regional network and realizing that this was a first and early opportunity to do something quickly, you know rather than developing strategy which we were at the moment, to actually pragmatically get in and do something and try something out. So I was thrilled about it. It was just, just absolutely at the right time.” (local authority B officer)

She was “pretty overwhelmed” by the response from headteachers in the LA: far more nominations than she was expecting. This is evidence that the notion of internship, a relatively new concept in English schools, immediately resonated with colleagues.

The LA officer was then asked why she thought there had been this type of response:

“We do good leadership development work but we hadn't actually done anything with the banner growing leaders, leaders of the future.” (local authority B officer)

The key target audience in the West Midlands was middle leaders:

“We in the first instance steered away from deputies.” (NCSL Regional Leader)

“My letter actually said an internship opportunity for middle leaders with senior leader potential and in brackets, I put, or it could be an assistant headteacher or deputy with headteacher potential, if a strong case was made.” (local authority B officer)

The officer from local authority A spoke about the type of programme they provided in 2006-07:

“I think the interesting thing was the risk factor. I think we were very conscious we’re working with people who had been nominated by their heads as potential school leaders I think that was a real virtue the fact that we didn’t spoon-feed and the project was called “growing leaders” and we watched them grow.”

She said she thought there was a danger that an internship programme could become too prescriptive – she wanted to avoid this and retain the risk. She said the 2006-07 programme was “edgy”. The other LA officer said that at the outset they had said to interns:

“And have fun with it, opportunity of a lifetime.” (local authority A officer)

Local Authority B, like other LAs in the research, is using succession planning funding to repeat the programme in 2007-08. There are 17 nominations for this programme. The officer in local authority A is also involved in 2007-08 with a development programme, including an internship dimension. This is funded through NCSL’s West Midlands Leadership Network. Four LAs are involved.

Both LA officers in the West Midlands – in tune with the LA officer in the North East – made explicit the huge significance of money: “funding was essential” (local authority A Officer).

Local authority summary

Generally, the LA officers involved were extremely positive about the internships, although there were linked concerns about continuing funding and sustainability. In broad terms, it fitted well with their overall ambitions for leadership development in their respective areas and their present needs (e.g. succession planning). It was a practical and positive example of LAs and NCSL working hand-in-hand. There were real synergies at play. For example, the on-the-ground intelligence of local needs held by LAs and the commitment of their skilled officers, combining with the practitioner-led verve of NCSL’s Leadership Network and its organisational link to a national organisation with a strong strategic focus and funding to support its work. Moreover, the complementary use of NCSL’s Leadership Network funding with monies devolved to LAs for succession planning. There was a real sense of “joined up” activity. The criss-crossing of relationships across LA boundaries marked the “networking of networks”; formal and statutory LA networks hooking up with informal and member-led NCSL networks; connections formed through this programme with the potential to flash to “on” and “fire up” in the future. Hence evidence of present performance, and creative potential.

It was very telling that all three LAs had decided to fund or part-fund leadership programmes in 2007/08 with an internship dimension. Moreover, all three NCSL Leadership Network regions were organising programmes in 2007-08 with an internship element; the North East ambitiously increasing its numbers to around 70 placements. This is a powerful endorsement of this form of leadership development, an approach where practitioners are centre stage. In addition, the newly redesigned NPQH is piloting in 2008 a placement theme to its programme.

When LA officers were asked to identify ways NCSL could support internships in the future, a number of ideas were suggested:

- ✓ NCSL compiling examples of good practice in the field and sharing them with LAs.
- ✓ NCSL could promote the value of internships to headteachers.
- ✓ NCSL could promote the value of internships to governors.
- ✓ NCSL could continue to provide funding.

Views of Leadership Network Regional Leaders

During research study two it was possible to record the views of Regional Leaders from three of the five participating regions: the East of England, North East and West Midlands.

East of England

The Regional Leader for the East of England explained the reason he chose internships for his regional programme 2006-07:

“It did seem that the national headline at that point in time and still continues to be succession planning challenge.” (East of England Regional Leader)

Moreover, with other regional leaders taking a similar view, colleagues across five regions developed a “common core approach to it with regional differences”.

Rather like regional leaders in the North East and West Midlands, he used already established contacts to get the message out to school leaders. Therefore, it was targeted communication. He was concerned that if he made the offer to all regional Leadership Network members, he may be overwhelmed with the level of responses.

Through his established contacts, he identified four hubs:

“I had got at least four areas of what, I felt, were significant contact with people who had significant contact with others.”

The four hubs:

- ✓ Eastern Leadership Centre - geographically central and with a large network of consultant leaders.
- ✓ Private consultant who works with the secondary headteachers in an LA and has “very, very strong contacts and influence”.
- ✓ *Ad hoc* group within an LA, which eventually became strongly, though not exclusively, a network of special schools.
- ✓ LA secondary school leadership academy.

There were approximately 50 primary, secondary and special school interns all told and internships mainly took place during summer 2007.

The NCSL Regional Leader collected interns' views through evaluation forms and a post-internship conference "celebration event" (around 60 people attended: interns, headteachers, and LA representatives). Below are some of the "headlines from the learning":

- ✓ Ability to articulate their own vision.
- ✓ School continuing the partnership beyond the formal conclusion of the internship.
- ✓ Experience of a different LA.
- ✓ Time for reflection.
- ✓ Opportunity to refocus.
- ✓ To experience the influence of someone else rather than just their own headteacher (this was not that they did not want the influence of their own headteachers but another perspective was useful).
- ✓ "The ability to really be far more honest, I think as well, than they would be with their 'home head'." (NCSL Regional Leader paraphrasing interns' views)
- ✓ Being in another school allowed some interns to be bolder in what they said because there was not the understandable "politics" you get in your "home school". Lack of "politics" led to a much more open agenda.
- ✓ When you go out of county (LA) interns could be a little "braver and bolder".
- ✓ Host headteachers appreciated the honesty of interns who were "energetic, aspiring people who just gave a different perspective" (NCSL Regional Leader).

During 2007-08 the East of England is organising another internship programme with around 50 placements.

In conclusion, the NCSL Regional Leader described internships as a "pure leadership learning experience" which is "the stimulus, the catalyst to changing people's attitudes, perceptions of themselves; confidence it has given about the route they will now be taking in their career."

North East

There were 36 internships organised in 2006-07 for primary and secondary schools. As with other regions, the shortness of notice led to a very hurried approach to identifying interns and schools. The Regional Leader used his established contacts to rapidly organise the internship programme (e.g. a diocese and a LA he was already in partnership with).

A simple and practical enquiry framework was designed and facilitated by NCSL's North East Regional Leader and a private consultancy (commissioned by NCSL's North East Leadership Network). The framework was based on three guiding questions for the intern:

- ✓ What do I want to learn from this school (host school) that will help the development of my own school (home school)?

- ✓ What would I like to learn from this school, which will develop my understanding of leadership and leadership learning and the possible role of being a headteacher in the future?
- ✓ What expertise can I bring to this school as an external eye and learn something on behalf of them that I can play back to the leadership of the school?

In the NCSL Leadership Network North East publication “Learning from a leadership internship programme in the North East” (Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007) a key aim of the programme is described:

“The internship programme created with the NCSL Leadership Network in the North East was designed to enable the participants to spend a week in another school; working alongside staff, contributing to the life of the school and in doing so consciously enquiring into the practice of another school.” (2007: 2).

To capture the learning achieved through the internships, a post-internship event was organized around five sessions:

- ✓ Sessions 1 – 3: centred on the three guiding questions above.
- ✓ Sessions 4: “what can we learn from the experiences of other participants that can inform our own practice?”
- ✓ Session Five: how might certain processes be applied in evaluating leadership practice in our own schools?

(Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007: 5 - 6)

Insights were then drawn from the sessions (Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007: 9 - 10). A selection are listed below:

- ✓ “In terms of school leadership it needs to be ‘in tune’ with its context – leadership will take on many different forms to achieve the desired result.”
- ✓ “Leaders to listen to others in their organization.”
- ✓ “Leadership is about consulting your ‘core’ when making any decision.”
- ✓ Good leaders encourage reflective learning and take part in promoting the vision of the school.”

It is clear from documentation and conversations with participants that the North East programme was very successful. However, the team in the North East was keen to identify improvements that could be included in future programmes (Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007: 14). The effective involvement of headteachers from the earliest stages of the internship was a key development point. This is being addressed in the 2007-08 programme (e.g. headteachers invited to the launch event).

West Midlands

The West Midlands organised around 30 internships across two LAs in 2006-07 and primarily, but not exclusively, aimed its programme at middle leaders. This broad approach, with some more senior leaders in amongst the middle leaders, had advantages including the pragmatic one linked to succession planning:

“Because I knew we had this crisis in school leadership [succession planning] coming quite quickly and I really like the idea of a mix of some, you know, assistant heads and deputies tipping them in to making the decision and like pretty quickly.” (local authority B officer)

The short notice given for the NCSL programme again impacted on arrangements. In keeping with other regions, the West Midlands Regional Leader used existing contacts (e.g. consultant leader colleagues) to accelerate organisation. However, one key contact was relatively new to her: an LA officer in a neighbouring authority. She had recently joined NCSL’s Leadership Network, on behalf of her LA. This contact had a significant and very positive impact on the West Midlands programme. At the focus group it was clear that the NCSL Regional Leader and LA officer worked extremely well together, both prizing creativity and responsible risk-taking.

Apart from short notice, funding was another complicating factor. Planning was made difficult because the amount of funding changed as the programme progressed. Even though the amount increased (i.e. a positive change) the unpredictability was problematic. However, even with these complexities of funding and timing, things happened very quickly and very successfully. For example, the LA officer from local authority B said she “had a great response from heads”. The NCSL Regional Leader’s assessment was likewise upbeat: “with the benefit of hindsight it was amazing how well we did manage with this, sort of, fluid pot of money”.

The programme itself was demanding, “we took them way out of the comfort zone... right from day one.” Terms like “edgy”, “risk” and “excitement” were watchwords. There was a real sense of creativity and experimentation about the programme. The intern spoken to appeared to very much enjoy this dimension of the West Midlands’ approach.

The NCSL Regional Leader explained how there was one intern who wanted to visit a school very similar to his present school and she asked him “this is the one chance in your life, are you sure, are you sure you want to do that? You can go anywhere.” Eventually the intern tried out a very different school from his own and he reported back to the NCSL Regional leader that it was fantastic that he had been encouraged to do that.

This sense of adventure was strong in the programme:

“step outside your comfort zone... Think about where you are on your leadership journey now, this is about taking your next step.” (local authority B officer)

Interestingly, the West Midlands decided to link the internship programme with the Teaching Learning Academy of the General Teaching Council of England. The Teaching Learning Academy (TLA) enables teachers to achieve formal recognition for CPD work they are involved with. Understandably there are quality expectations connected to TLA recognition, which require the writing up of CPD activities. This dimension was attractive to the West Midlands team:

“It would be good, in terms of them being on a sort of intelligent journey, to produce a quality piece of work at the end, an evaluative piece of work.” (NCSL Regional Leader)

However, the TLA was not the reason for having completed an internship; the internship process was key:

“The reason for doing it [the internship] was not to write a TLA at the end, that was, that was just the sort of almost tick in the box at the end to show that you’d done it and that you’d reflected on it, and you’d learnt something. But it was the journey that was important.” (NCSL Regional Leader).

Summary

Pre-internship stage

The internship programme was popular with schools and interns from the outset. Moreover, the launch meeting, self-evaluation form and pre-internship meetings were well received by both interns and the participating schools. Interestingly, a number of processes were used to select the interns, from internal advertisements followed by application, to senior leaders simply choosing a colleague.

Internship stage

Many aspects of the internship were judged as valuable, especially access to senior leaders, including the headteacher; exposure to different leadership styles; and time to focus and reflect on leadership *per se*. Interns learnt many leadership lessons during the programme, particularly about leadership roles, leadership styles, and the significance of individual school contexts on leadership. On a personal front, interns noted a range of changes in themselves. For example, a boost in confidence was mentioned by a number of respondents. Schools also commented on changes in the interns: more confident, broader experience, better understanding of the whole-school picture, and greater efforts made to increase teamwork.

With regard to the effectiveness of host schools in supporting their interns, praise was provided for them by the vast majority of interns. Similarly, the schools congratulated the interns on their efforts to fit into host school life and get the most from the internship experience.

Post-internship stage

The key difference between the internship programme and other forms of professional leadership learning was that it was context-based, hands-on and realistic. It was, in addition, more personalised, and lasted for a longer period of time. With regards to impact, the programme led to most interns judging themselves as better leaders as a result of the internship. These improvements included greater confidence, increased awareness of whole-school matters, and more involvement in their own school's leadership. Schools also commented on changes in the interns: more confident, broader experience, better understanding of the whole-school picture, and greater effort made to increase teamwork. Schools also commented on other benefits for their establishments: gained an independent view of their school from visiting interns; provided an opportunity for the school - and senior leaders therein - to reflect on its particular way of doing things; enabled their leaders to share their ideas with colleagues from other schools; and marked the beginning of continuing partnerships between the respective schools.

Interns and their schools generally felt that the experience had made it more likely that interns would apply for more senior positions, including headship.

Suggested programme improvements

The diversity of responses to this question makes it difficult to discern central themes. However, five interesting comments follow:

- ✓ Greater emphasis on feedback, whether it is from the host school to the intern; from the intern to the host school; or from the intern to his or her “home” school.

- ✓ Encourage continuing links between the intern and his or her school, and the host school.
- ✓ Ensure the intern visits a host school with a different context (e.g. school size, pupil intake).
- ✓ Ensure the intern has a good understanding of his or her “home” school’s leadership structure and workings before exploring the leadership of another school. This would then give the intern a benchmark to measure against.
- ✓ Greater clarity about the programme, including information about the required personal commitment from headteachers to the process (e.g. their availability to interns), and that the focus must be on leadership, not teaching and learning.

Overall effectiveness

In general terms, schools and interns saw NCSL’s five-region internship programmes 2006-07 as a success. All schools stated that they would be keen to take part in the programme again, and all interns noted that they would recommend it to colleagues. With respect to the organizational efficiency and effectiveness of the programme, the questionnaire results are positive, although a small number of schools commented on some lack of clarity in the initial stages. This may have been caused by the short notice provided and, furthermore, changes in available funding in the early stages.

The actual words and ideas of respondents have been at the heart of this evaluation report so it is fitting for their opinions to provide the conclusion:

‘A well organised and positive experience for myself and the school.’
(London secondary assistant headteacher)

“An opportunity that we had never had before” (North East secondary intern)

“A brilliant opportunity and a very humbling experience.” (London primary (headteacher)

“I highly commend the internship – I believe it provides an excellent professional development opportunity.” (London primary headteacher)

“I thought it’s a brilliant idea, I thought what an opportunity for people, wished I had that when I was younger.” (North East primary headteacher)

“A very valuable and memorable experience. “Thank you” for the opportunity.”
(London secondary school intern).

References

“Learning from a leadership internship programme in the North East” (Brown, Holmes and Woods 2007).

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