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Project Report

Work, learning and professional practice: the role of leadership apprenticeships

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Introduction

Numerous research studies into leadership development and training in schools have pointed to the key role that the workplace plays for the professional development of teachers and other staff. The continuing professional development (CPD) literature often makes a distinction between the 'workshop' and the 'workplace' stating that the latter is more powerful than the former in terms of people's professional learning and practice (Bubb and Earley, 2007). Yet it is the case that the power of workplace learning for school leaders has not been analysed or theorised in any detailed manner. Workplace learning can take a variety of forms for leadership development and includes both formal and informal experiences. School leaders, for example, when asked what had been the single most powerful learning opportunity in their development as leaders, often make reference to the significance of working alongside headteachers, noting the power of both positive and negative role models. Yet there are few examples where working with headteachers (in their own school or elsewhere) is seen as a deliberate training strategy. This study also briefly documents and categorises the range of on-the-job or workplace experiences currently being deployed in leadership development programmes.

However, the main focus of this paper is on what we term 'leadership apprenticeships' (a concept not found in the leadership development literature). In the US the term 'administrative internships' is used and has similar meanings. Currently there are two leadership development schemes in England that make use of such apprenticeships or internships. These are the *Headteacher Trainee* scheme and the *Future Leaders* initiative, both of which are part-run (and funded) by the National College for School Leadership. In both cases prospective heads and/or senior leaders are attached to a school placement for a considerable period of time, usually one academic year. At a time when there are questions being asked about where the next generation of school leaders will come from in the light of a large number of retirements expected in the next few years, such apprenticeship schemes, although expensive, have considerable appeal to both policy makers and national and local governments.

Both of the above leadership trainee schemes have recently been externally evaluated with funding from NCSL. The evaluation of the trainee headship scheme was conducted by a professor from the USA (Crow, 2005), whilst the fast track leadership development programme, *Future Leaders*, was undertaken by a team from the Institute of Education (Earley, 2007). The evaluation of the first two years of this pilot programme was completed by the end of September 2008.

The programme, which involved identifying a small number of qualified teachers with leadership potential, is based around a 12 month period of residency in an urban complex school that is deemed to be well led and managed. The residential period although supported by an on-going training



programme and external coaching, is crucial to the development of the individual Future Leader. It is during the residential that the FL (the apprentice) is attached to the school's senior leadership team (SLT) and provided with a range of learning experiences as a senior school leader. The person is also mentored within the school by the headteacher (a positive role model) and meetings are held regularly throughout the year. The findings of the FL evaluation were positive and all but one of the 20 individuals in the first cohort have secured permanent posts, most of them at deputy head level. There is an expectation that they will secure headships in challenging urban schools within four years.

However, the potential of the residency period for leadership learning has not been theorised in any significant way. This paper explores the value of leadership apprenticeships and analyses the complex relationship between the workplace, learning and professional practice as senior school leaders. Contact was re-established with the first cohort of FLs and their residency headteachers (or a sample of them) after a period of time (over six months after completion) which enabled reflections on the residency experience and the key learning points to be made. Interviews conducted with participants provide insights into the process of leadership learning and the crucial role that the residency or internship can play. Their perceptions of the relationship between work, learning and leadership practice with particular reference to the 12-month period of residency in schools (leadership apprenticeships) are discussed but first the literature on leadership development and leadership internships/apprenticeships is briefly reviewed.

Literature review

a) Leadership development

The literature on leadership development is extensive and leadership development methods which are perceived to be effective in both the public and private sectors include: on-the-job training and *in-house* training; coaching and mentoring; the use of consultants; formal induction; and job rotation (Bush, 2008; Earley and

Jones, 2008). A growing body of research has shown that certain approaches to leadership development have a positive effect on the progression of staff professionally. Storey (2004) suggests that most leadership development experiences offered in-house can be classified into four types:

1. Learning about leadership and organisations: primarily involves classroom and workshop methods to present leadership theory and research.
2. Self/team analysis and exploration of leadership styles: a series of methods e.g. psychometrics, 360 degree feedback, coaching, to raise awareness of self and others and how this impacts upon leadership styles.
3. Experiential learning and simulation: approaches that emphasise the importance of 'learning by doing' e.g. action learning, role-play.
4. Top level strategy courses: executive development courses designed for senior managers often taking place off-site and associated with prestigious business schools and qualifications.

The best programmes made good use of the workplace as a site for leadership learning and how leaders learn best and develop their skills as leaders is discussed later.

In education, a recent review from Stanford of the US leadership preparation literature (Darling Hammond et al, 2007) points to a number of important features of school leadership development programmes, including:

- Research-based content that is aligned with professional standards and focused on instruction, organizational development, and change management
- Curricular coherence that links goals, learning activities, and assessments around a set of shared values, beliefs, and knowledge about effective organizational practice
- Problem-based learning strategies, such as case methods, action research, and projects, that link theory and practice and support reflection
- Cohort structures that enable collaboration, teamwork, and mutual



- support
- Mentoring or coaching that supports modeling, questioning, observations of practice, and feedback
 - Collaboration between universities and school districts to create coherence between training and practice as well as pipelines for recruitment, preparation, hiring, and induction
 - Field-based internships that enable candidates to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner.

The remainder of this review considers this last point on administrative internships or what we prefer to term leadership apprenticeships.

b) Leadership internships and apprenticeships

Leadership apprenticeships - or what are more usually called administrative internships - are more common in the USA than in the UK. In the 1990s Murphy noted that more than 90 percent of all educational administrator credential programmes in the US required an internship experience of some kind (Murphy, 1992). These could vary from a few days or weeks to a whole year's placement. A study of internships conducted by the Southern Regional Education Board (STRB, 2005) in the USA began by stating:

In many professional fields, the internship is the ultimate performance test, the final rite of passage before gaining an initial license to practice. A well-designed internship expands the knowledge and skills of candidates while also gauging their ability to apply new learning in authentic settings as they contend with problems that have real-world consequences. Built right, the internship becomes a sturdy vessel upon which new practitioners can navigate the swift, unpredictable currents that separate classroom theory and on-the-job reality (p3).

However, on the basis of its study of 61 principal preparation programmes in the 16 States in the STRB region it remarks that in far too many cases, 'the internship "vessel" is leaky, rudderless or still in dry dock' (STRB, 2005, p3).

Their potential value however is undisputed and although internships for aspiring principals are relatively common, too often, as the recent report from the Wallace Foundation notes 'they are fleeting and involve observation rather than hands-on leadership opportunities' (Wallace Foundation, 2008, px). The Stanford project (Darling Hammond et al, 2007, p16) noted that in relation to field based internships adults learn best when they need to apply newly-acquired skills and knowledge in authentic settings, and guided by critical self-reflection. They note that professional internships in the fields of medicine, engineering and educational administration are based on experiential learning (Baugh, 2003) and continue:

Ideally, strong internships provide candidates with an intense, extended opportunity to grapple with the day-to-day demands of school administrators under the watchful eye of an expert mentor, with reflection tied to theoretical insights through related coursework (Daresh, 2001).

The STRB report (2005) notes that school leaders learn 'through studying the key concepts and skills used by effective leaders, observing good models and by one's own trial and error in the workplace' and that graduates of principal preparation programmes 'consistently report that their most significant learning occurred during their internship experience'. This general observation is endorsed by the findings of the evaluations of two English programmes which utilize internships or apprenticeships.

Leadership apprenticeships in the English education system

In this section attention is given to two English leadership development programmes which make use of administrative internships or leadership apprenticeships. Both are offered through the NCSL and each one has been the subject of an external evaluation.

The first programme, the 'Trainee Head' scheme was developed by the (then) Department for Education and Skills and was aimed at preparing heads for schools facing challenging circumstances. The



first cohort of 11 individuals, experienced deputies, commenced in autumn 2001, when they were placed for a period of one year to work alongside mentor heads. The interns were additional staff members not replacements and as Crow (2005) notes they were able 'to experience more of the headship role without having substantial responsibilities that might diminish the learning opportunities for them' (p67). Trainees or interns met monthly with others on the scheme and project administrators to discuss best practice, reflect on their experiences and develop networks. The project staff visited the host schools regularly to monitor the intern's experiences and meet with the mentor head. Crow undertook the evaluation of the scheme and suggested that the length of the internship needed to reflect the needs of the trainee; the optimal time will depend on the intern's previous experience and existing skill set. It was suggested that the type of role assignments should change as interns move through the programme. Crow found that the selection and matching of interns with the right mentors was significant and schools were at different stages of development with some unable to give sufficient time to the trainee. He also states that 'the skills, sensitivity and values that interns bring can enrich the learning resources of the school or duplicate what is already there' (p71).

Crow concludes his evaluation by stating that internships are powerful learning tools but they do have several pitfalls. He notes that they 'can provide enriched learning opportunities for interns to learn about themselves – their learning styles, leadership styles and strengths and weaknesses' (p74). Mentoring can help increase the intern's reflective learning skills and gain personal confidence whilst the internship can broaden experience, encourage new ideas and risk-taking and develop networks 'that can contribute to the knowledge repositories that new leaders need especially when they first become heads' (p75). Crow points to three pitfalls of internships: the tendency for interns to develop a heroic image of the head rather seeing effective leadership as one which balances direct and distributive leadership. Secondly, there is a danger that they perpetuate the status quo rather than encourage an innovative view of the

role of school leader, and lastly, internships can promote dysfunctional relationships between the mentor and the intern, when for example, the mentor has personal interests in mind rather than the intern's learning.

In his evaluation Crow also talks about the benefits of the scheme to the mentor heads themselves and their schools. These include the mentor having the opportunity to reflect on their own practice, gaining new skills and insights and networking opportunities. The host school may also benefit from additional resources, expertise and staff development opportunities and through increasing its leadership capacity. Crow notes:

If the internship is designed and promoted as a co-learning experience rather than simply transmitting management folklore, it can enhance an organizational learning environment (p76).

However, internships are expensive learning tools and 'an intern who refuses to be open to learning or who does not bring the requisite skills can take away time and resources from more immediate and critical school needs' (p77). For Crow a key concern is the length of the internship which will depend on the learning needs of the intern and also will affect its cost.

Future Leaders, the second NCSL course involving an apprenticeship, is a fast-track or accelerated leadership programme which aims to develop both practising teachers and middle leaders and high quality individuals currently not in the schools teaching system, who would like to become Heads, Deputy Heads and Assistant Heads in urban areas. The programme has been created largely due to the shortage of teachers taking on senior roles within schools, which is particularly acute in urban areas and especially in London, but also to create a cadre of school leaders who commit their future careers to working in urban schools. The scheme is a partnership managed by ARK (Absolute Return for Kids) a charitable trust with an interest in overcoming educational disadvantage with support from the NCSL, the DCSF and the Specialist Schools and Academy Trust (SSAT).

Recruitment to the scheme commenced in early 2006 and after a series of selection



stages, 20 candidates were offered places and commenced the pilot programme undertaking training during the summer term and over the summer holidays. The central features of the programme are noted below:

Future Leaders recruits and prepares talented people to become highly effective urban school leaders and provides rigorous, hands-on leadership training and development, a year long paid residency, and two years coaching during their first leadership role. We help place our participants in urban complex schools and provide them with supportive networks and a community of peers (extract from FL job advertisement, July 2007).

The pilot programme, which was initially only offered in London, aimed to recruit, train, develop, place and support 20 participants initially over a two-year period. All those involved in the pilot had previously held a teaching position in schools and although QTS is no longer needed to be a headteacher of a state school in England, QTS was required to be part of this fast track leadership development programme. The pilot placed participants in secondary schools in London. After selection and summer training at the NCSL in Nottingham, Year One included a full-time residential placement with a host school where the apprentice joined the senior leadership team. They were mentored by the school head and coached by one of four external coaches, all of whom had been successful heads. During the first year, the apprentices applied for posts as deputy head or assistant head within a secondary school, which they would take up in Year 2, during which time they would continue to receive support from their coaches. All 20 secured posts for 2007/8 some of which were in their host schools. Further cohorts began their training in subsequent years and since 2008 the scheme has run in Manchester.

The evaluation of the first year of the programme was generally positive and the main findings have been reported elsewhere (Earley, 2007). The evaluation considered the three phases of the programme: the recruitment and selection, the training, and the participants' experiences during their internships. The

evaluation concluded that the programme was operating successfully and had made a very promising start. The next section draws upon these evaluation data along with follow up interviews to explore further the key learning points during the internships.

Residency experiences and challenges

The one-year residency or internship in an urban complex secondary school is a central part of the programme. These residency schools, led by outstanding headteachers, are intended to give the participants the opportunity to work alongside a head and senior leadership team who are skilled at tackling the types of issues commonly found in such schools. The evaluation of the pilot reported that there were a number of schools that did provide an optimum experience during the residency, but there were others which were more problematic, for various reasons. The evaluators noted that the most effective residency schools had a strong commitment to CPD and the development of all staff to a high standard, including the leadership team. Heads were proactive in sharing their experience and provided excellent mentoring. Good management structures and clear communication were well established and the modelling of effective leadership practices was evident.

In the second year of the scheme, more research was done before the residency schools were chosen; Ofsted reports and performance data were analysed, coaches visited potential schools and the team produced a document which listed 11 expectations of the host schools (e.g. a challenging role; residency experiences; designation or title of the intern, in-school mentoring; induction and training).

The evaluation concluded that a key issue was whether the placement provided sufficient opportunities for the intern or apprentice to grow and develop as a leader and to gain the confidence to apply for and obtain a senior post for their second year. For most of the apprentices, the residency offered a very useful developmental opportunity but there were challenges including the matching process, the amount of teaching, the lack of challenge, limited or no line management



responsibility, and the project work. It was found that the role given to the apprentices varied significantly across the residency schools, depending partly on their previous experience and the needs of the school. Some had a substantial role, with plenty of senior leadership experience, and others were given roles which provided whole school experience, but not necessarily at senior leadership level.

The evaluators noted the variability of the residency schools and that there were only a relatively small number of schools which appeared to be exemplary in the ways in which they handled the residency and made it successful for both sides. These schools had good systems and communication processes in place and put high value on staff development. Some of the host schools were not seen to be very effective learning environments for the leadership apprentices.

In order to explore these matters further we asked the participants what they perceived to be the key learning points of the residency experience. We also asked the host school heads what benefits, if any, accrued from having an apprentice in their senior team. The external coaches were also asked about the greatest challenges of the residency and how it might be improved. It is to their (and others') views that we first turn before considering the key learning experiences of the internship as perceived by the apprentices and others.

a) Views on the residency

One of the coaches spoke of the three main challenges faced by the apprentice during their residency which affected their learning and development. These were the need to:

1. establish yourself in the school (but this depends on how well the school receives you);
2. establish yourself in a credible job with actual or real responsibility – ask 'what is my responsibility here?'; and
3. maintain impetus in the second term when the apprentice needs to find a job.

Another coach thought there were no obvious trends to the challenges of the residency – 'the issues are to do with

individuals and individual schools', whilst for another the selection of the school was the big issue. It was noted that:

Those (apprentices) with lots of experience need a major set of responsibilities. If they don't get it we are letting them down. Those with less experience need a different school. There is a lot of variety in the (apprentices) and once you put school selection into the mix it becomes a very complicated business.

The coaches were also asked if the residency experience could be improved and how the apprentices could get the most 'value' from the experience. All four were aware that there was room for improvement and that changes were constantly being made to ensure a quality experience. However, one coach noted that:

No matter how explicitly defined, practice on the ground will vary. In the best practice the (apprentice) will have responsibility at Deputy Head level and there will be tight monitoring by the head. Sometimes the input by the head is wonderful, but in other cases there is a lack of input. We have to select the school carefully.

Another stressed the need for tighter criteria for the choice of residency school and to insist on a basic entitlement, such as a reasonable timetable in the apprentice's subject area and access to the programme's continuing training. To address these and other matters some guidance for residency schools had been produced (11 expectations) and a new staff member appointed to visit possible host schools and moderate them (i.e. trying to make sure that they will provide the apprentices with a good experience).

The variability between the residency schools was noted and one coach said, 'I have come to see the crucial importance of the residency and how that has varied from school to school'. However, the coaches also felt that even residencies that had been problematic had provided beneficial learning experiences for both parties:

X's experience last year was ultimately



valuable, and she's still in contact with the head of that school. But she had to stand up for herself, to get what she needed from it. She had a big impact there, on staff and the SLT. The SLT changed the way they worked as a result of X being there. X is phenomenally good with people. She managed the head of her residency school extremely well and sensitively.

Having a difficult time last year seemed to make her stronger to deal with her current school. She needed a lot of coaching, but she made tremendous progress during the year. This has also boosted her confidence. It's interesting that she has been particularly successful, after a shaky start, which shows the progress that can be made.

X and his residency school did not fit well with each other. But at the end I think both benefited immensely from the experience. Staff there said how much they would miss him – they realised what he had done. The issue of fit is an interesting one. You try to ensure that both the school and the (apprentice) are happy. But X showed that it can be beneficial to have a bit of a mismatch.

One coach suggested that having too well-run a school might not have given sufficient exposure to the intern of the problems in changing the culture in challenging schools:

(We) need to think carefully about the nature of the placements for the residency. If the school placements don't give sufficient preparation, then the (apprentices) might struggle. In some schools, there is, for example, a high turnover of pupils and staff, and school leaders have not had time to establish a different culture in the school. These are the types of urban schools that pose challenges. Once a school becomes more stable, these types of challenges are less in evidence.

This view was supported by one of the headteachers who remarked that some of the schools used for the residency were working so well there was little to learn – the residency or internship was more like a study visit. In one particularly well-run school, however, the participant felt that the

experience had prepared her for headship: it showed her how to run an excellent school. Another said,

I felt a bit surplus at X because it was such a well-run school. But I had time to reflect on headship. I learned emotional things, how to be a bit distanced.

Two of the less effective apprentices had not learned sufficiently from their training or placement to ensure that they will become effective senior leaders, or achieve headship. One headteacher said:

He gets very excited by the new ideas that the scheme inspire but he seems to take them on board wholeheartedly almost as propaganda rather than thinking critically and grounding things in the current reality of our school.

Nearly all of the leadership apprentices found the residency very beneficial:

My residency at X was excellent because it gave me the chance to work in a tough school which was very well led, to see how things could be.

The residency was an excellent experience, with an outstanding head, I learned so much. Coming from there, I had a real sense of what could be achieved in improving a school in a short time.

However, another said, 'In order to prepare me to become an effective deputy I can say I did not learn a great deal at X'. Another admitted, 'The things I experienced last year undermined my own confidence'. But several whose residency school had not come up to expectations, managed to use the experience to positive effect:

I felt a bit 'done' in that other people had a better residency than me, but with hindsight the experience at X was good for the context I'm in now. But I would have liked to have been forced to do something more specific and significant with a measurable impact.

Obtaining most value from the residency experience was said to depend heavily on the apprentices themselves and how proactive and conscientious they were. The



value of the residency was also dependent on the host school involving them in school life and the work of the SLT. One coach noted:

Its value will depend if the SLT is well structured and organized and still learning and if the (apprentice) 'fits in'.The influence of the school on what happens to the (apprentice) is greater than that of the organization. Schools and heads operate in different ways and you need to adapt your mindset accordingly. For example, (name) is at an 'outstanding' school (how it got that category is another matter!) but is not making the most of things, she needs to change her mindset.

b) Key learning points

The leadership apprentices were asked about the key learning points of their internship or residency. What had they learned from the host schools and how? The initial cohort on the programme were asked to reflect back on their experience last year (2006-7) whilst the second cohort were just coming to the end of their residency period at the time of the interviews.

For one apprentice, looking back, there had been three key learning points from the residency year:

- *My expectations were challenged and raised. I now think it is possible for every child to get 5 A*-C and that is what we are aiming for in the Academy.*
- *I have a clearer belief that a school's culture and ethos have to be sorted out before you can sort out teaching and learning. There is a need to achieve consistency across teachers.*
- *The influence of what I saw in the US, and the extra training I did last summer have been crucial. I've brought that back, and I want to make it British.*

For another:

There were so many key learning points – the learning curve was great but it still remains steep! I'm learning all the time. Examples include: how to organise events, leaving no stone unturned, how to use pupil progress data (monitoring and tracking). I learned to be more confident (even if you're not underneath!), to blag it and give the impression you know

the answers! The biggest challenges were (and still are) keeping all the plates spinning at once – keeping everything going and getting it done on time – not letting things slip.

Many learning points were offered and they usually referred to such things as: values, vision, visibility, celebration, confidence, consistency, resilience, reflection, relationships, networking, a better understanding of what can be achieved and the importance of effective leadership, especially from the head.

The following are examples of the responses from the first cohort:

I was with a head who is a bit of a maverick. But I learned a lot from him about how to develop a culture of celebration and how to run a school to meet the needs of the pupils and the community. The head had already been to New York and had started doing some of the things he had seen there, so it was a good match for me.

There were numerous and invaluable learning points from my (residency) experience. I think the most important thing I learnt was the value of consistent and transparent systems that enable people to be more effective. I would have drowned (at my current school) without the experience I had at X. I can see now even more clearly that the quality of the headteacher in the residency year is vital. Because I was with such a strong headteacher, it made me believe that the job is do-able. If I had had an experience of a lackluster headteacher the process would have been very dispiriting.

I learned to be able to de-personalise things – it was not about me. I used the technique of 'fierce conversations' to tackle confrontation with people – and I have got even better at it here.

Hold tight to your values. Focus on teaching and learning and what goes on in the classroom. Resilience. Translating ideas into action quickly. Taking people on board. Communication about everything. I have taken far less time to make things happen, as long as you have people



working alongside. You can refine and develop as you go along.

I had a great residency. A great placement. I hadn't seen that kind of leadership before in all my 11 years of teaching. I had been about to leave teaching, but (name of head) restored my faith.

Finding my voice. And being clear about what my beliefs are about school improvement and the residency period did me a lot of good. I gained a lot of confidence. I think a lot about staff competence in a way that I didn't before. If things are allowed to continue it can damage the kids and need to be moved on quite quickly to give the students a chance.

The residency period was excellent. I had the best programme going. I was very lucky. The leader is outstanding so I leaned so much from that. I learned from that more than anything else. It was a challenging urban failing school that turned around. Not everyone else was so lucky.

The second cohort made similar points to the first:

The biggest thing is resilience. I've developed this. This has come through the job application process and doing that alongside being in school, and attending the training, and having a personal life.

There are so many. I've learned that I personally can do the job. It's an emotional job. I think that's something that is overlooked.

As far as the residency goes, it's been good, because I've had the capacity to develop myself. The school hasn't done it, we haven't sat down and had a conversation about situations, but I've just had to get on with it.

Some of the apprentices - from both cohorts - made reference to the downside or less positive side of the residency. They noted that the key learning points had been about what not to do (negative role models) or for the need to make the most of the situation they were in:

I didn't agree with the way he ran the senior team. I didn't enjoy it particularly, because I was cut out of key strategy meetings. So I didn't learn anything about handling strategic issues. There were lots of tensions and politics in the senior team.

Minimal (learning) because of the projects I have been given. I question having a one year placement, if I were here next year it would be better. Schools are not going to give out responsibility when you are an unknown quantity.

What I've learned is not what (they) sent me to the school to learn! e.g. the type of school I want to work in and the kind of leader I want to be.

Really, all I've been is an extra body, who can teach a little bit of maths - but I'm really a music teacher. I have tried to improve things at the school and get a more significant role. I asked to go to deputy head meetings and line management meetings and have been refused. I have suggested ideas, but it's like bashing your head up against a brick wall. Everyone in the senior leadership team feels the same way, and they all acquiesce to the headteacher in meetings. So it's been really difficult, and it's knocking my confidence, but I am dealing with it and I've got to be resilient. I'm a very positive person and people at school have no idea how low I'm feeling inside.

c) Benefits of having an apprentice

The last quotation gives an indication of the exasperation that can be felt when schools fail to take advantage of a the apprentice - a new senior staff member - and what they can offer the school. But what did the heads think about this - what were the benefits of having an apprentice in the SLT for a year and were there any drawbacks?

Residency school heads made positive reference to the role of projects, external perspectives, different ways of working, extra capacity and the introduction of new ideas. Two heads made a comparison between how it should be and how it had been for them this year:

It has been a fresh set of eyes to bring



a different dimension. It has been a 'yardstick' for other Assistant Heads and Deputies. Our (new apprentice) will clearly bring a new dimension with the insight to question, reason and help us to re-assess what and how we do things. He will definitely ADD to our school progress, whereas, our current (apprentice) has not really added anything to our school's progress this year.

In general an (apprentice) would be able to challenge existing practice, bring in new ideas and share responsibilities (both strategic and day-to-day). In practice this has rarely happened (this year).

No real drawbacks were identified by the heads although a few were unhappy about the apprentices' regular absence to attend training events and job interviews. Another expressed the view that the programme is about the apprentice and their learning so the school or senior team did not anticipate that the apprentice would have a huge impact on them. However, the impact they were having was in some cases considerable and the heads welcomed some of their attributes and abilities.

Her professionalism, her stickability. Some deputies just touch the top of things, she follows through.

Vision and strategy. Great coaching and mentoring approach.

The good part is her capacity to stand back and reflect. The programme provides the headspace for those on the course to do that. There's that whole energy and confidence that comes with having time to work out what one's views are about things. That's positive. Its reminding us we're part of a movement and not just a school that's up against the world.

One headteacher went as far as to say:

She's light years ahead of other appointees! I've rarely worked with someone with her intellectual and other abilities. When I compare her with my former colleagues at (name of school) several of whom have gone on to headships, she's in a different league – she cuts to the chase and has high

expectations.

Discussion

The most effective programmes of leadership development and preparation for headship make good use of the workplace as a site for leadership learning but it makes little sense to discuss ways of developing leaders without also considering the manner in which leaders learn. Speck and Knipe (2005) provide an overview of what is known about the characteristics of professional development that lead to high levels of adult learning. They found that adult learners:

- will commit to learning when they believe that the objectives are realistic and important for their personal and professional needs;
- want to be responsible for their own learning and should therefore have some control over the what, who, how, why, when, and where of their learning;
- need direct, concrete experiences for applying what they have learned to their work;
- do not automatically transfer learning into daily practice and often benefit from coaching and other kinds of follow-up support to sustain learning;
- need feedback on the results of their efforts;
- come to the learning process with self-direction and a wide range of previous experiences, knowledge, interests, and competencies.

The evidence from our interviews suggests that elements of all of the above were found in the programme's participants. What is perhaps not emphasized above is the need to build in sufficient time for reflection on practice. Follow up support from coaches was crucially important and was used, albeit to varying degrees, to promote self-reflection on performance and this was aided by reference to an urban leadership competency matrix. Our future leaders learn from the experiences accrued during their internships but they learn more from having opportunities to reflect on those experiences and time needs to be made for this which is enabled through regular meetings with coaches and mentor heads. Creating time for structured



reflection opportunities is important.

The Stanford project (Davies et al, 2005, p16) also pointed to the importance of guided critical self-reflection. They noted that in relation to field based internships:

There is a sizeable body of research that suggests most adults learn best when exposed to situations requiring the application of acquired skills, knowledge, and problem-solving strategies within authentic settings, and when guided by critical self-reflection. Cross-disciplinary studies on experiential learning show that exposure to concrete elements of real-world practice can increase a leader's ability to contemplate, analyze, and systematically plan strategies for action (Kolb and Boyatzis, 1999).

The Centre for Organisational Research (2001) identified a number of principles embodying high-impact leadership development systems or approaches that help leadership learning. It found leadership development programmes made use of action and experiential learning to make the learning process 'real'; they encouraged leaders to take responsibility for planning and implementing their own learning experiences to meet their needs; development was encouraged at three levels: self, team and organisation; they had a core mission statement or all-encompassing purpose around which the system and programmes were built, which drives all initiatives and behaviours, is aligned with corporate strategy and is clearly communicated to all staff. The Centre also found that effective leadership development programmes provided a culture that was supportive of leadership development at all levels and they encourage multi-disciplinary experiences 'to drive breakthrough thinking and innovation' (through such activities as job rotations, global assignments and development assignments). They also made use of mentoring to help leaders develop leaders and they assessed the development of leaders from a number of different perspectives (e.g. peer reviews, review by superior and subordinates). Finally, they found that high-impact leadership development systems or approaches made good use of technology and e-learning.

Again, a number of these principles or elements were found in the future leader programme of which the internship or residency was a key part. The culture of the school and the degree to which it was supportive of leadership development was crucial. Perhaps surprisingly it did not appear to be the case that all the host schools participating in the project had such learning-centred cultures. They were not all 'learning-enriched schools' (Rosenholtz, 1999, cited in Bubb and Earley, 2007) or professional learning communities (Bolam et al, 2005). Fuller and Unwin (2004, cited in Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson, 2005) have made use of a similar concept in their study of apprenticeships in the steel industry. They refer to 'expansive' and 'restrictive' learning environments which reflect the considerable differences they observed in the quality of apprentice learning in different firms in the steel industry. An expansive learning environment is one that presents wide-ranging and diverse opportunities to learn, in a culture that values and supports learning' (Hodgkinson and Hodgkinson, 2005). The programme's aim was to ensure all those schools accommodating administrative interns or leadership apprentices were 'expansive learning environments'.

Conclusion

With reference to the United States the STRB (2005) reports that:

a quality internship program creates the opportunity for aspiring principals to demonstrate, under the guidance of an experienced and trained school leader and a university supervisor, that they have mastered the necessary knowledge and skills to change schools and classrooms *and can apply these skills effectively* in a school setting where they must work with real teachers to accelerate student achievement.

They also note that many of the existing programmes are failing to capitalize on what they see as the most powerful component in their leadership curriculum. Only a small percentage of administrative internships offer a developmental continuum of practice that begins with the intern observing, then participating in, and



then leading important school reform work. They state that quality internships demand careful planning, coordination with local school systems, and close supervision by knowledgeable experts who have a track record as successful school leaders.

Elements of these were found in England within the internship or residency school experience of the leadership apprentice. This paper has considered 'on-the-job' development experiences, albeit superficially, associated with a leadership development programme called 'Future Leaders'. The role and value for learning and professional practice of a year's residency in a host school, working with and for an effective headteacher, has been examined and some of its strengths and weaknesses discussed. Adults learn better through on the job training and skill application in real life situations. Of course, evidence of the apprentices' future success in gaining headship and then successfully enacting the role will not be available for some time yet.

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