

# E-Learning for Leadership: Emerging indicators of effective practice

**Case Studies** | Autumn 2003



A review of literature carried out for NCSL  
by **Angela McFarlane, Anton Bradburn,**  
**Agnes McMahon and Nel Roche**  
of the Graduate School of Education,  
University of Bristol



National College for School Leadership

## Contents

Introduction	2
Key findings	3
About the study	6
Case study 1: Store managers' development programme	8
Overview	8
Analysis – information that addresses the research questions	8
The managers' development programme in relation to the effective practice indicators	9
Case study 2: University business school's pre-MBA programme	12
Overview	12
Analysis – information that addresses the research questions	12
The professional diploma in management in relation to the effective practice indicators	13
Case study 3: Multinational company's leadership programme for managers	17
Overview	17
Analysis – information that addresses the research questions	18
The leadership programme for managers in relation to the effective practice indicators	18
Case study 4: Induction programme for new headteachers	22
Overview	22
Analysis – information that addresses the research questions	22
The new headteachers' programme in relation to the effective practice indicators	23
Overview of all cases	26

## Introduction

This publication is a companion to the literature review of e-learning for leadership, also carried out by the University of Bristol on behalf of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). [see [www.ncsl.org.uk/literaturereviews](http://www.ncsl.org.uk/literaturereviews)]

The literature review identified 10 indicators of effective practice in e-learning for leadership.

- Adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes
- Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain:
  - Personal goals and aspirations
  - Learning style preferences
  - Competences with information and communication technologies
  - Time management capabilities
  - Ease of access to computers
- Creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners
- Ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet connections
- Taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision
- Providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications
- Encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment
- Delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely
- Offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme
- Devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised

This paper sets out to test the validity and utility of these indicators. It does this by using the indicators to examine four case studies of e-learning for leadership based within and beyond education in the UK and elsewhere.

## Key findings

Of the indicators to emerge from the preceding literature review, the following were present in all of the case studies:

- ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain:
  - competences with information and communication technologies (ICT)
  - ease of access to computers
- ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet (or intranet) connections
- taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision
- delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely
- offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme
- devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised

Indicators that did **not** emerge from the literature review but have become evident from case studies include:

- linking the programme directly to career advancement
- building in systems that guide/pressure learners to completion of the programme
- assessing the e-learning activities so that their quality becomes an essential part of the successful completion of the programme
- ensuring that learning within work time is recognised and legitimised by employers
- ensuring the programme has high status in the relevant community

Indicators only present in the three examples that showed a developed e-community included:

- providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications
- encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment

With regard to the indicator:

- ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain:
  - personal goals and aspirationsif it is presumed that in a private sector situation, the personal aspirations and goals of learners are the same as the company's then this indicator is present in all case studies.

The indicators that are found in some of the case studies but not others include:

- adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes
- ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain
  - learning style preferences
  - time management capabilities

One indicator was not present in any case study, ie

- creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners

The testing of the model has highlighted what appear to be significant elements of effective practice. However, it is clear that the context in which the programme takes place impacts on what can be considered successful practice. The most significant indicators present in the theoretical literature but not in fact evidenced throughout the case studies related to the degree to which programmes take into account the values or needs of learners. Unsurprisingly given the relative scarcity of research in this area, additional indicators have emerged from the case studies that could be considered of equal importance to those found in the literature and evidenced in the reported cases. In what follows, each case study is discussed in relation to all of the emergent indicators, those from the original review and those from the studies themselves.

### Summary of indicators present in the case studies

Indicator	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3	Study 4
Adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes	**	***		***
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain personal goals and aspirations	**	***	*	**
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain learning style preferences		***	**	***
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain competences with information and communication technologies	**	***	***	**
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain time management capabilities	***	**	**	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain ease of access to computers	***	**	***	**
Creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners				

Ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet connections	***	**	***	**
Taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision	***	***	***	***
Providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications	*	***	**	***
Encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment		***	***	***
Delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely	***	***	***	***
Offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme	***	***	***	***
Devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised	*	***	**	***
Linking the programme directly to career advancement	***	***	***	*
Building in systems that guide/pressure learners to completion of the programme	***	***	***	***
Assessing the e-learning activities so that their quality becomes an essential part of the successful completion of the programme	**	***	***	*
Ensuring that learning within work time is recognised and legitimated by employers	***	*	***	***
Ensuring the programme has high status in the relevant community	***	**	***	***
No stars = Not present One * = Present but with significant qualification Two** = Partially present Three *** = Present				

## About the study

The selection of the case studies was based on three criteria:

1. Source: two examples were to be selected from the UK and two from other sources. Within these selections, two were in the private domain and two were in the public sector.
2. Availability of evidence in relation to the research questions in the original brief to investigate effective practice in e-learning for leadership:

These were:

- what motivations and aspirations apply to leadership e-learners?
  - how do leadership e-learning programmes successfully recruit and retain learners?
  - how is success evaluated? What application and impact is attributable?
  - what factors produce satisfying learning experiences?
  - what features are included in programmes deemed successful?
  - what are the most effective practices for online tutoring and facilitation arrangements?
  - what are the most effective features of online community collaboration for learning?
  - are cost benefits identifiable?
  - how effective is e-learning as part of a blended learning experience, compared with conventional face-to-face programmes?
  - considering the programmes in use in corporate/private, public and educational settings, what similarities and differences are evident? What influences are apparent?
  - how are curricula and learning processes similar and different across programmes and contexts?
3. Suitability for investigation of the emergent indicators of effective practice in e-learning for leadership in order to carry out a critical analysis of its components and report its implications for the development of future e-learning for leadership programmes. For example the case must identify a leadership component and make significant use of e-learning.

Twenty-eight cases that had the potential to meet the requirements of the project, were identified. Four programmes were selected on the basis of the quality and quantity of evidence available and the maturity and extent of the programme. The participant organisations were asked to provide access to the content of their programmes and in each case, a key informant was available to provide additional information. Further evidence was drawn from the relevant white<sup>1</sup> and grey<sup>2</sup> literatures, which had been found in the earlier literature searches and updated during the time of the case studies.

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<sup>1</sup> Formally published and often subject to peer review

<sup>2</sup> Not usually subject to peer review or commercially published

The final choice of case studies included:

1. the store managers' development programme of a nationwide department store chain (online leadership programme in the UK private sector)
2. a university business school's pre-MBA programme (mixed media leadership development modules involving students in online collaborative working in the UK public sector)
3. a multinational company's leadership programme for managers (online leadership programme in the international private sector)
4. a publicly funded online school leadership project carried out by a non-UK university (online programme for school leadership in the international public sector)

Field information was combined with the material gained from the literature review for each institution and analysed against both the research questions as a basis for comparative analysis and the effective practice indicators. The last two research questions, "Considering the programme in use in the corporate/private, public and educational settings, what similarities and differences are evident? What influences are apparent?" and "How are curricula and learning processes similar and different across programmes and contexts?" have been addressed in the Overview of All Findings at the end of this report where it is possible to make a comparison between the individual case studies. From the studies, conclusions have been drawn that could be used constructively in guidelines for future e-learning for leadership programmes.



## **Case study 1: Store managers' development programme**

### **Overview**

This publicly quoted company operates 51 stores throughout the UK with a workforce of around 7,000 employees. According to the company's annual report, business turnover for the trading year 2001/02 was £964 million from which profits before interest payments and taxation charges (PBIT) of £25.6 million were generated. The annual report (2001/02) also states that the company provided more training programmes and more training hours than in any previous year. The report goes on to suggest that a record number of internal promotions and a reduction of five per cent in staff turnover were associated with this increase in training.

For the research, the company provided course material for the programme for personal development and a journal article was also consulted. The management development manager of the company was the key informant.

This staff development programme had been initiated by the company's Training and Development Division. Although some in-house material was included, several outside agencies were employed to develop a large part of this programme for new management staff. Course areas developed included resource management, managing people, leadership, financial management, marketing, business strategy, operations management, customer services management, ICT skills and time management. Apart from 'general management' that was a part of each participants' programme, the choice of courses depended on the area of expertise being developed, eg buyers, fashion managers. Initially, the courses were piloted in six stores with the full programme available to all stores (1,000 potential participants) by the end of 2000.

The Store Manager Development Programme is a structured programme that begins with an induction module lasting six months. During this induction period there are progress reviews with line managers after six weeks and again after 12 weeks. Throughout the induction phase participants are supported by line managers, training advisors and human resource specialists.

The whole programme uses a blended approach to delivering the learning content. This blend incorporates:

- a series of one and two-day workshops staged in out-of-store locations – some with a residential component
- shadowing a sponsor manager in his/her own store for three days
- computer-based learning – primarily for ICT skills
- open learning workbooks delivered via the corporate intranet

Course descriptions suggest that leadership is addressed within the activity of shadowing a manager, as part of some of the workshops and in a substantial number of the people management intranet materials.

### **Analysis – information that addresses the research questions**

The motivation and aspirations of the e-learners in this private business are linked to promotion, although their literature emphasises that work-satisfaction is also important. The company's policy relates promotion and personal development directly to the management programme through the Performance and Development Review (PDR) completed annually, and the resulting Personal Development Plan (PDP). Online tutoring and the establishment of an online community do not appear to be features of the programme although participants can expect support from their line managers and from the company's training advisers.

The development programme puts the onus on individuals to be in charge of their own personal development and this, along with its progressional structure, appears to have been successful in recruiting and retaining learners. The high status of the management programme, its blended learning structure and its emphasis on the individual's control of progress, all appear to be factors in producing a satisfying learning experience. Further factors appear to include the management's policy to value different aspirations and the fact that career development is directly related to successful completion.

The evidence provided suggests that the company considers the programme as a whole, successful. No part is picked out for special mention and the company believes that the blend is important for success. However, it was stated that the use of their intranet had provided a consistent standard throughout the country; a situation that was not always possible in regional development programmes delivered through local face-to-face events.

The programme was established as a response to evidence that indicated staff loss was due to lack of opportunities for personal development. Therefore, greater retention of staff is considered an important success criterion that has been met. The management consider the use of the intranet cost effective compared with regional training days, particularly mentioning that delivery can take place at any time and the quality is consistent.

### **The managers' development programme in relation to the effective practice indicators**

The programme does appear to adopt a learner-centric approach in that from the outset individuals are made responsible for identifying their own personal development needs by conducting an appraisal of their existing competences and the competences required to fulfil their professional roles successfully. However, the programme available to them assumes common needs across target audiences. Line managers are available to direct and support individuals in the achievement of competences through their PDPs.

Pre-programme diagnostics are found in the initial six-month introductory programme when there are reviews with a line manager at six and 12 weeks. In this way, personal aspirations and goals are addressed and supported through the PDR process. However, there is no evidence to suggest that learning style preferences were a consideration when establishing the programme content and structure with individual participants.

With regard to ICT competences, learners are encouraged to conduct their own training needs analyses and are introduced to the SWOT<sup>3</sup> technique following which it is suggested that they should formulate a personal development plan. It is recommended to them that their plans should contain a number of learning objectives written according to the SMART<sup>4</sup> rules. It is likely that any lack of competence with ICT would be identified as a result of conducting the SWOT and SMART procedures.

The e-learning is carried on through the company's intranet thus providing the benefit of dedicated time within the work context. Also, the use of the corporate intranet guarantees online connection quality.

It could be argued that the programme developed reflects aspects of the store culture and it may be that by engaging with the programme, learners are at least tacitly accommodating the programme's values within their own values.

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<sup>3</sup> Identification of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats in relation to job competences

<sup>4</sup> SMART = specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time related

Specific opportunities for participants to get to know one another are not referred to in the documentation, but there are face-to-face training days in the programme where it could be presumed some personal contact would be made. There is no evidence of collaborative learning in the online elements of the programme, nor is there any evidence of attempts to promote a group dynamic in support of learning activities. However, some of the modules are concerned with the development of team working in the store setting although there does not appear to be a formal learning community of store managers.

With regard to delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure, there is one face-to-face two-day workshop on the topic of leadership with seven other related skills workshops. There is a series of short online modules on managing people ranging in content from team motivation and working relationships to coaching style. There are 22 of these people management e-learning modules, each lasting between 17 and 80 minutes, the average length being about one hour.

Line managers appear to have the primary responsibility for the provision of a support role to learners. Additional support is provided to learners by the company's in-house training advisers. It is not clear whether support is continuously available, or whether it is only available intermittently through periodic formal reviews such as the PDR, which is mandatory once a year.

In the managers' programme, personal development reviews appear to be the only means of appraising learner satisfaction. There seem to be no measures for gauging programme quality in the sense of its fitness for purpose. The overt measures of success are found in the promotion and retention targets which seem to be met, and are linked directly to the training programme in the company annual report.

The key informant also reported that the company had found the introduction of the e-learning element not only cost effective but also successful in retaining staff. Further, the company appeared to be satisfied with the quality of aspects of the manager's role including leadership that they attributed to their training programme.

Summary of indicators	Present	Partially present	Not present
Adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes		Yes*	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain personal goals and aspirations		Yes**	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain learning style preferences			No
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain competences with information and communication technologies		Yes***	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain time management capabilities	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain ease of access to computers	Yes		
Creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners			No

Ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet connections	Yes		
Taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision	Yes		
Providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications		Yes ***	
Encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment			No
Delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely	Yes		
Offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme	Yes		
Devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised		Yes ****	
Linking the programme directly to career advancement	Yes		
Building in systems that guide/ pressure learners to completion of the programme	Yes		
Assessing the e-learning activities so that their quality becomes an essential part of the successful completion of the programme		Yes	
Ensuring that learning within work time is recognised and legitimated by employers	Yes		
Ensuring the programme has high status in the relevant community	Yes		
<p>* in that the learner assesses their needs at the beginning of the programme so that programme choices are based to some extent on the learner's previous experience.</p> <p>** the management's policy to value different aspirations and the fact that career development is directly related to successful completion.</p> <p>*** only within the course</p> <p>**** only through retention of staff</p>			

## **Case study 2: University business school's pre-MBA programme**

### **Overview**

One of the routes to the university's Masters degree in Business Administration (MBA) is through a professional diploma. This is composed of two courses; one of which is a professional diploma in management. As the diploma programme contains a significant element of online collaborative learning and is associated with leadership development, it has been selected for this study.

The university business school provided course materials for our research. Additional information was taken from the university website. The key informant was the Course Team Chair for the professional diploma programme.

The professional diploma programme was launched in May 2001 and was expressly designed, developed and written to be undertaken as a distance-learning programme. It is an ongoing programme and students are able to join the course in February, May, August, or November of the same year, ie there are four annual cohorts each consisting of about 200 students.

The diploma course learning materials are a blend of printed units, audio-cassettes, CD-ROMs and videotapes. There is also a course website and online conferencing. In addition to its distance learning content, learning also takes place through face-to-face interactions in tutorial sessions, seminars and residential workshops. When students enrol, they are given the option of either face-to-face support combined with computer mediated communication (CMC) or online only support with CMC activities. They also have the opportunity to participate in an online equivalent of the residential school. Each student is supported throughout the programme by a dedicated tutor, who is available regularly by email, online conference, telephone or post.

### **Analysis – information that addresses the research questions**

Learners appear to be motivated to undertake this programme either in order to improve their career prospects or alternatively to aid a change of career. Completion of the programme offers the gateway to higher earning potential and the opportunity to enrol on an internationally recognised MBA course.

With regard to recruitment, the business school is supported by the wider university's student recruitment programmes providing appropriate websites, prospectus and free-phone call centres to deal with student enquiries, as well as having its own marketing department.

The course is assessed by six assignments marked by tutor, an exam and a project. The pass rate at about 90 per cent would indicate the success of the style of course delivery. There are ongoing developments in the course requirements within the CMC environment. At present the students' CMC collaboration activities are graded and those marks are counted towards the overall assignment score. There is anecdotal evidence from tutors that indicates a correlation between students with high grades and CMC participation. There is a retention rate of about 95 per cent for students that can also be taken as an indicator of student satisfaction. In addition there are results from a biannual student survey to indicate there is considerable student satisfaction despite a high degree of stress related to workload and online collaboration. All student feedback is discussed at course team meetings.

There has been a recent study completed on the diploma course that provides further information about the course's effectiveness and student satisfaction.

Firstly, the students rated flexibility and easy availability as important factors in their learning experience. The materials are designed to be portable and provide a blend of types of learning allowing students to study when and where they choose. Forty per cent of participants reported that they found 'learning in small groups' a satisfying learning experience, while thirty percent regarded 'face-to-face' and twenty five percent thought 'learning through online interactions' similarly satisfying. Feedback from students also indicated that they rated the residential school as beneficial, helping them to apply and understand course concepts and preparing them for the exam. In a comparative study of the face-to-face residential school and the online alternative, the university found that for most students who participated in the online school, the experience was found beneficial with the learning being more relevant and with more depth. Comparing face-to-face tutorials to online tutorials was considered more difficult, because students have opted for each delivery method. Comparison of exam results showed no difference. The online conferencing facility where tutors contributed to discussions was rated as very important by 25 per cent and important by a further 50 per cent of those sampled, while 84 per cent of learners agreed that tutor group working had made a valuable contribution.

The recent research has also shown that when tutors play a facilitating role in the virtual conferences, there are more productive contributions with students encouraged to set their own boundaries including deadlines, tasks and type of members' contributions. One of the most successful features of online community collaboration for learning appeared to be the depth of learning students are able to achieve. Among the tutor qualities rated by the learners sampled were friendliness, good humour, being supportive and encouraging, responding promptly, being knowledgeable and engagement in online discussions.

When tutors were asked about how effective e-learning is as part of a blended learning experience, it was considered very effective in that it gives students the opportunity to collaborate with fellow students.

Within a distance learning environment it was difficult to ascertain cost benefits of one particular delivery method. However, for the student, cost in terms of finance and time away from home appear to favour CMC.

### **The professional diploma in management in relation to the effective practice indicators**

The course appears to have been designed to accommodate the needs and reduce the difficulties of the learner in a distance-learning context. The use of personal tutors, materials in a variety of formats and a well structured programme of study with recommended study completion dates and assessment deadlines are all established to support the learner.

The business school does not conduct any form of pre-programme diagnoses, although it does have specific entry requirements relating to experience and qualifications. Also, there is no evidence to suggest that learners are surveyed in order to ascertain what their personal goals and aspirations may be. However the recruitment facilities of the university provide comprehensive help in course choice in relation to career needs, pre-qualifications and course descriptions.

The success of the programme appears to be related to the blended delivery of the course which contains a variety of learning situations that could accommodate a range of learning styles. The course team appear aware of the need for different styles through students' feedback and the close monitoring of the CMC developments. The statement that the course developers and tutors believe the medium (CMC) suits the 'reflectors' who are able to read the

messages and spend time researching their answers before replying, suggests that learning styles are an important consideration in course construction.

Access to a suitable computer and internet connection are prerequisites for the course. The level of ICT ability is assumed, as the course description makes clear that CMC is an essential part of the course. However, guidance is provided online and through CD-Rom. There is also an ICT helpdesk for the students that can be contacted seven days a week by telephone or email.

A learner's ability to manage time efficiently and effectively does not form part of any pre-programme diagnostic process. However, the course is structured with deadline dates for assessments and there are study guidelines with recommended section completion dates. Tutors will also support students who are having difficulty with time management.

With regard to students getting to know one another, participants belong to tutor groups with a designated tutor who facilitates communication. Particular effort is made at the beginning of the course to establish a self-help group. This process has been helped by the presence of an online tutor group conference. There are, also, online conferences for the course students for social/work comments as well as online tutorial conferences for the course of study. Because of the nature of distance learning and the difficulties both of time and expense for students of getting together geographically, the university has placed considerable emphasis on the development of CMC as a means of students getting to know and supporting each other.

The tutor is an essential part of facilitating the group dynamic. Collaborative working using CMC is considered an essential part of the course and is assessed. There is increasing emphasis on tutors being able to ensure effective learning through CMC activities. The tutor is available through the conference, email, telephone and the postal service. Tutors provide guidance, mark assessments, provide feedback, facilitate tutorials face-to-face and through CMC. There are guidelines for both tutors and students with regard to frequency of tutor support online.

The blended learning structure incorporates face-to-face and CMC. There is a movement towards more CMC, which is monitored and modified to be more effective, as it is seen as the most efficient way of providing a varied learning environment in distance learning situations.

Leadership development is represented in the context of general management. The Course Team Chair for the professional diploma programme indicates that leadership development is considered an implicit part of the content of the course when stating:

We expect them to have some kind of leadership role at the start of their course and to move up through their company as their study career progresses.

This study although limited in the development of leadership does provide a sophisticated use of e-learning beyond mere training. As has already been stated in the literature review, the number of examples of e-learning for leadership are severely limited by the newness of the medium.

The university's appraisal of the course has taken place through the tutors, a biannual student survey, course team meetings and through a recent research report: all structures set up to ensure regular feedback on course quality and satisfaction.

<b>Summary of indicators</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially present</b>	<b>Not present</b>
Adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain personal goals and aspirations	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain learning style preferences	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain competences with information and communication technologies	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain time management capabilities		Yes*	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain ease of access to computers		Yes**	
Creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners			No
Ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet connections		Yes**	
Taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision	Yes		
Providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications	Yes		
Encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment	Yes		
Delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely	Yes***		
Offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme	Yes		



Devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised	Yes		
Linking the programme directly to career advancement	Yes		
Building in systems that guide/ pressure learners to completion of the programme	Yes		
Assessing the e-learning activities so that their quality becomes an essential part of the successful completion of the programme	Yes		
Ensuring that learning within work time is recognised and legitimated by employers			No****
Ensuring the programme has high status in the relevant community		Yes*****	
<p>* in that the programme is structured with completion dates for work and assignments</p> <p>** both aspects through essential prerequisites for the course</p> <p>*** although the course is blended, most is delivered through CMC</p> <p>**** the course is often paid for by the employer and work time provided for residential school</p> <p>*****in that it is an access course to an MBA</p>			

## **Case study 3: Multinational company's leadership programme for managers**

### **Overview**

This is a global organisation with a workforce of approximately 320,000 employed either directly, or through subsidiary companies. The company's annual revenue is some US \$86 billion and it controls assets worth US \$88 billion.

The case study was explored and analysed using a variety of sources including a video programme explaining the nature of the programme, two in-house organisational documents about the development programme and aspects of training provision and a journal article co-authored by two senior managers. The manager of New Management Development, the key informant, provided responses to research questions.

The programme studied was started in 1999 and is one of the company's management development programmes. It is a blended programme, which aims to develop the leadership and human resource management skills of first line managers. It is being delivered to 30,000 first line managers, who join the programme in groups of 24. The programme is structured into a four-tiered learning hierarchy. While the majority of the learning experience is delivered via the intranet, the top tier is offered in classroom settings.

The first tier of the course is a database of information and tools, which first line managers can access anywhere and at any time. The contents of this tier are intended to support these managers in their new roles. The database is searchable by index, or by keywords and delivers material to the managers' desktops for online reading. There are 100 core items in this repository, many of which have a human resources focus. Some of these items have been provided by a university business school. The tier also provides links to external databases. In the first six months of the programme the professional learners complete a range of activities online and receive coaching from second line managers.

The next tier of the hierarchy offers opportunities for interactive learning. This level uses eight different simulations relating to leadership in workplace situations. There are a further 14 simulations dealing with the management of human resources. These 22 simulations each contain some 5,000 screens of actions and pose around 100 decision points for the learners.

The third tier is the level at which first line managers can interact with their peers via e-learning tools. Three groupware programmes provide virtual spaces for collaborative learning and the development of team working skills. One of the objectives of this level is to encourage the formation of networks.

The top level or fourth tier of the learning hierarchy uses human interactions to foster leadership development. The company considers face-to-face learning to be the most powerful tool for the development of people skills. The learning at this level is delivered by means of in-class activities. The information states that e-learning is not deployed in order to eliminate face-to-face education and training, but rather to enhance this more traditional approach. In the company's form of blended learning the aim is that valuable face-to-face learning time is not spent on the transfer of information, but on higher order learning.

All learners complete a survey on the quality of the programme on completion. Approximately 1,000 learners participate in focus discussions throughout the programme to ensure it meets their learning needs. This informs the continuous updating and development of the programme.

## **Analysis – information that addresses the research questions**

Managers are encouraged by the company to participate in self-development. Those who complete the programme achieve recognition as qualified first line managers.

New managers receive an icon they load on their desktop to improve ease of access to e-learning. Online automated reminders are used with course support as well as administrative support. Also, a community is built up by using a collaborative space based on the belief that being part of a larger group keeps the new manager focused on completion of the work. There is a time restriction so that if completion is not on time, the work has to be repeated. It has been found that after the participants finish three modules there is a high probability they will complete the e-learning part of the programme. Currently there is a 95 per cent completion rate.

Collaborating online with peers and second line managers is an important element of the programme. The quality and ease of access are considered to be very important. With regard to the e-learning parts of the course, the management believes that they enable content to be delivered more in the way that the learner wants it with no waiting. Also, content can be delivered any where in the world.

The programme has 80 online study hours and a further 16 hours of online testing. At the fourth level there are 32 in-class hours. Learners were reported to be equally enthusiastic about online and off-line elements and seemed to be well motivated as a whole. They had preferences for receiving the cognitive material online either at home, or in the workplace and preferred the behavioural material to be experienced in a classroom context.

Success is evaluated in terms of winning business in a particular market segment. Success is also related to competitive advantage. Return on investment from a first line manager undertaking the programme is reportedly in the ratio of 57:1. with a recovery of investment within two weeks.

Leadership is regarded as underpinning success that is evident in efficient departments and improved sales.

In addition to being measured by business results, success is measured by the number of hits on management development intranet websites. A further measurement of success is related to the numbers of managers engaging with the various development programmes. The company believes that successful leadership contributes to working co-operatively to bring together networks of creative individuals. Successful leadership also leads to the workforce's acceptance of the company's mission and to customer satisfaction. Leaders that have the abilities to develop trust and create vision as well as being innovative, inspirational, empowering and collaborative are deemed successful although it is not made clear how or when these qualities are monitored.

The information provided underlines the company's belief that the programme's success resides in the way it combines e-learning with in-class activities including self-study, online simulations, individual competence assessments, online tutoring, line-management coaching and classroom experiences.

### **The leadership programme for managers in relation to the effective practice indicators**

The designers of the managers' programme firmly reject a learner-centric approach on the grounds that it does not guarantee effective learning. They argued that learners do not understand the differences between alternative learning styles. Their approach refers to studies of innovation diffusion. They use a model of five elements, which predict whether, or not, an

innovation will be successfully diffused. These predictors are relative advantage, comparability, complexity, trialability and observability.

With regard to ensuring learner-to-programme alignment through pre-programme diagnostics, at the beginning of the first tier, there is a set of management and leadership competency assessments. There is no obvious evidence relating to personal goals and aspirations, but there appears to be an underlying assumption that employees will want to progress from being managed to managing and leading others.

In this type of multinational company, it is probable that all of its potential first-line managers will have proved their ICT competency at an earlier stage. There is no specific evidence to suggest that there is any pre-programme diagnosis of competence with time management, although it may feature in the pre-entry set of management and leadership competency assessments. There are time reminders used in the e-learning programme and there is a time limit to completion. Assuming that learners engage with the programme during work time then ease of access to computers is presumed. The online elements are delivered via the company's intranet and the key informant stressed several times that quality and ease of access were important to the success of the programme.

There is nothing to show that the cultural values of participants have been taken into account. In this business situation, it appears that it is the company's mission that dictates the values in training programmes. The key informant states, "Success is if the learning takes place, is applied and has a business impact". The fact that the return on the investment from a first line manager undertaking the programme can be quoted with a recovery time indicates that the efficiency and effectiveness is based on business values.

Participants would not seem to have the opportunity to get to know one another prior to commencement of the programme. However, participants are brought together in the third and fourth tiers of the programme. Initially they come together in virtual learning environments and later they work in action learning groups in classroom environments.

Participation in the programme appears to encourage collaborative working within the e-learning environment through a variety of virtual learning situations and through a number of different business-based tasks.

The four tiers of the programme incorporate a blended approach to learning while participants are supported through online tutoring provision and coaching from their second-line managers and classroom facilitators.

The quality of the programme appears to be primarily measured by its success. However, it is stated that the company commissioned research that consulted participants before and after experiencing the programme and these findings were considered in further development. Information from the learners' focus group discussions throughout the programme and the completion of a learners' survey at the end of the programme, are also used to try to ensure learner satisfaction.

<b>Summary of indicators</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially present</b>	<b>Not present</b>
Adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes			No
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain personal goals and aspirations			No
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain learning style preferences		Yes*	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain competences with information and communication technologies	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain time management capabilities		Yes**	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain ease of access to computers	Yes		
Creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners			No
Ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet connections	Yes		
Taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision	Yes		
Providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications		Yes**	
Encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment	Yes		
Delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely	Yes		
Offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme	Yes		
Devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised	Yes		
Linking the programme directly to career advancement	Yes		
Building in systems that guide/ pressure learners to completion of the programme	Yes		
Assessing the e-learning activities so that their quality becomes an essential part of the successful completion of the programme	Yes		

Ensuring that learning within work time is recognised and legitimated by employers	Yes		
Ensuring the programme has high status in the relevant community	Yes		
<p>* The learner has control of how they proceed through the learning. The content is controlled by the business.</p> <p>** there are structures within the programme that support time management and developing an e-learning community</p>			

## **Case study 4: Induction programme for new headteachers**

### **Overview**

Sources included a copy of the proposed induction programme for the new headteachers. This document contains an overview of the purpose and structure of the programme, a description and explanation of the programme's component parts and a series of timetables setting out the learning activities for the duration of the programme. After design completion, another university delivered the programme and further material was provided in the report of an evaluation conducted by this university in 2002 describing the structure of the programme, as it was rolled-out. There were key informants from both institutions who together, provided responses to the research questions.

The programme is a government initiative and was launched in April 2002 with the second intake in April 2003. There are about 200 principals in each year cohort. The induction programme is designed to help to meet the needs of new headteachers and help them develop professionally and personally. There is no formal qualification at the end of the programme.

The programme is a non-mandatory one-year induction programme comprising four related parts – residential courses, mentoring, e-learning and research. It blends three, 4-day residential modules with online interactions, mentor school-based visits and the development of a personal portfolio. The research element includes self-evaluation, responses to each residential course and feedback about mentoring. These are all used as a base for the project team to make improvements to the programme.

All first-time headteachers taking part in the programme are members of a password protected new headteachers online community which is part of a government website for all school leaders. The online community is designed to enhance and build on material discussed in residential modules and provide contact with course mentors. It is expected that the online environment will help to develop educational leadership knowledge and skills and it will enable the new headteachers to ask questions relating to leadership and management issues in a safe, secure, online environment. It is intended that the sharing of ideas, experiences and solutions with other new headteachers will be encouraged and a support network developed.

### **Analysis – information that addresses the research questions**

Participation in the course would appear to indicate an inherent desire to aspire to better leadership despite the lack of a formal qualification at its conclusion.

The programme is considered successful in its structure as a blended learning experience including residential modules, mentoring, e-learning and evaluation, all of which are interrelated and enhance each other.

The e-learning programme is an intrinsic part of the induction programme. The e-community is password secure to encourage confidence. It provides advance information of events, resources and residential course follow up activities. It hosts online discussions which encourage and enable the participants to share their ideas, practices and problems, as well as to receive feedback from an educational expert on a specific issue.

The course is evaluated through self-evaluation questionnaires, evaluation of courses and feedback about the mentoring process. As the programme has only been running since 2002, its impact is yet to be assessed.

The report on the evaluation of the programme highlighted particularly successful curriculum modules. These were conducted by academic experts and were predominantly evidence-based inquiries into a topic, grounded in research data and theory-driven but using examples that were school-based and directly linked to the leadership of the headteacher. Evidence that the participants' evaluations had been acted on in the production of later parts of the programme was rated highly by the participants.

Evidence suggests that the online element has been visited between once a fortnight and monthly and is considered useful. As a result of the evaluation more emphasis will be given to the online element in future years. The role of mentors is being continually updated with the provision for greater contact that will encourage more electronic interaction.

Collaborative activities are an important element of the workshops in the residential modules. Care is taken to establish groups of headteachers in similar situations when in a face-to-face situation so that e-communities can be developed where collaboration in a safe environment can be fostered.

The effectiveness of e-learning has not been fully realised in the programme and therefore no real comparison with face-to-face can be made. However, the evaluation indicates that the e-learning element will be developed in the future.

### **The new headteachers' programme in relation to the effective practice indicators**

The learning agenda is negotiated with the participants. Although personal goals and aspirations are not mentioned, the philosophy underpinning the new headteachers' programme emphasises the vision and goals shared by new headteachers with their professional colleagues and the school community within which they work.

The programme is taught in a way that meets their professional needs and is respectful of their prior experience. The online facility was developed with the intention that the programme structure would incorporate sufficient flexibility to allow for differences in learning style preferences in addition to the differing needs of participants.

In the initial design of the programme, the first few weeks were concerned with enabling new heads to develop their competences in the use of the virtual learning environment and the range of tools available to them within it.

With regard to access to computers, one of the initiatives that accompanied the programme was the provision of laptop computers for all headteachers in the country. The newly appointed heads had all received a machine by April 2002. However, ease of access to internet connections has been an issue in some areas. Efforts to overcome this problem involve the government offering contracts for the supply of broadband access to rural areas, especially schools.

There is no information about time management capabilities.

The participants are provided with opportunities to get to know one another at the first of the residential modules at the beginning of the programme. This is prior to the major use of the online facility and part of the programme includes workshops that specifically encourage the establishment of groups with similar interests that can work collaboratively online.

The programme has a blended structure. There is an online community to serve three purposes. The first of these is for new heads to be able to work on course material experienced in face-to-face modules. Second, it provides a forum for discussion and thirdly it provides an online space to encourage dialogue between participants, course facilitators and mentors.



Evaluation takes place through course evaluation feedback from participants and mentors with regard to the mentoring process and through self-evaluation by questionnaire and portfolio. At present these are ongoing evaluations. External government evaluation will also take place.

<b>Summary of indicators</b>	<b>Present</b>	<b>Partially present</b>	<b>Not present</b>
Adopting a learner-centric approach to the design and delivery of programmes	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain personal goals and aspirations	Yes*		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain learning style preferences	Yes		
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain competences with information and communication technologies		Yes**	
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain time management capabilities			No
Ensuring a learner-to-programme alignment through a range of pre-programme diagnoses to ascertain ease of access to computers	Yes		
Creating programme content which accords with the cultural values of the professional learners			No
Ensuring availability of fast and reliable internet connections		Yes***	
Taking an efficient and effective approach to programme provision	Yes		
Providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications	Yes		
Encouraging the professional learners to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment	Yes		
Delivering leadership development by means of a blended learning structure although the proportions of a successful blend may vary widely	Yes		
Offering ongoing support to learners throughout the programme	Yes		
Devising and implementing measures through which programme quality and learner satisfaction can be continuously appraised	Yes		
Linking the programme directly to career advancement		Yes ****	
Building in systems that guide/ pressure learners to completion of the programme	Yes		

Assessing the e-learning activities so that their quality becomes an essential part of the successful completion of the programme	Yes		
Ensuring that learning within work time is recognised and legitimated by employers		Yes *****	
Ensuring the programme has high status in the relevant community	Yes		
<p>* all those participating are new headteachers who wish to improve their leadership qualities.</p> <p>** the initial programme indicates ICT competencies are considered but this is not referred to in later information.</p> <p>***the provision of fast and reliable internet access is not always present in certain areas of the country</p> <p>**** it is presumed that course completion would enhance chances of promotion</p> <p>***** residential modules take place in the holidays but mentors visit in school time</p>			

## Overview of all cases

The four case studies have been used to analyse the components of the effective practice model in order to assess its validity. The results have not only shown if the indicators are present in these successful case studies but also, if there are omissions from the model that have emerged through the analysis. Further, indicators present in some cases but not others have provided an insight into their importance within certain environments. Therefore, the findings have implications for the future development of e-learning for leadership programmes.

Adopting a learner-centric approach i.e. placing the learner at the centre of programme design and delivery, is adopted by the two examples from educational institutions. For the private business examples, the organisational objectives appear to take priority over the needs of the learner which are assumed will align. One of the examples also rejects a learner-centric approach on grounds of educational theory.

With regard to personal goals and aspirations, in the private sector, it can be argued that the individual in studying to succeed within the company, takes on the corporate aims which then become their personal goals and aspirations. Even when there are no such enterprise pressures, the two educational institutions appear to only account for individual goals and aspirations by presuming that they have taken up the course because it is what they want or need to do to progress in their career.

Learning style preferences are taken into account in all examples in that they are all blended programmes with a variety of learning formats. However, the business school pre-MBA programme is the only one that indicates that it recognises different learners characteristics. With regard to ICT competencies three, (one private and two public) appear to have either diagnostic tests or pre-course conditions together with either an ICT programme or other support that can be used concurrently with the course. The other private firm also offers help if needed during the course. Ease of access to computers is addressed in all examples but although in the two public sector cases recommendations are made, the provision is reliant on other outside factors, eg provision of a computer by another agency or the individual learner.

Time management is addressed thoroughly in only one private company example. However, in two others, one private and one public, there are structures established throughout the programmes that aim to keep the learners on track.

It is difficult to assess the indicator that concerns the cultural values of the learners. As with the goals and aspirations, it would appear that in the private sector the learner takes on the values of the company in order to succeed within it. None of the studies showed explicit consideration of this indicator in their programme.

As successful ongoing programmes, it is assumed that all the case studies have adopted a sufficiently efficient and effective approach to programme provision, with high quality and relevant content.

With regard to providing opportunities for the professional learners to get to know one another prior to the commencement of programmes in order to optimise peer-to-peer and reciprocal learner-to-facilitator communications, all but one of the examples provide either pre-course or induction sessions to establish some connection with peers and facilitators. This may take the form of a face-to-face activity early in the programme or a tutor supported e-conference or both. All have the opportunity of face-to-face sessions at some time in the programme.

In three of the four examples, the professional learners are encouraged to develop a group dynamic in order to promote collaborative working within the e-learning environment. One

private and the two public institutions train and support their learners in developing collaborative learning. Assessment and completion targets are used as incentives, while structured collaborative tasks are used as the medium. The one example that does not use online collaboration does run face-to-face workshops where collaboration appears to take place.

In delivering leadership development, all the examples use a blended learning structure. Collaboration within the e-learning conferences is used to deliver some aspects of leadership but in fact much of the complex interactions appear to be most successfully delivered in face-to-face situations. Where a majority of the programme is delivered through distance learning there is the least explicit leadership development. However, this may be due to the aims of the programme rather than the inability of e-learning to deliver leadership development.

All case studies offer ongoing support throughout the programme. Those which use e-learning as a collaborative tool, stress the importance of their support systems. Both the public and private sector institutions that use e-learning as a major part of the course have provided tutor support that is available frequently and regularly.

The programmes that show ongoing development have the most thorough methods of appraising programme quality and learner satisfaction. Both the public sector case studies and to a lesser extent one private sector study have developed methods that are learner orientated and therefore appear to feedback into improvements in quality related to learner satisfaction. The private sector examples, however, look to success rating through increased productivity, promotion and staff retention. Where there is less commercial sensitivity, there appears to be a more ongoing appraisal with reviews of the course material inherent in the programme structure.

Access to the company intranet appears to have resolved the need for reliable internet connections in the two private case studies. However, this network also needs to be reliable. An intranet by its nature may limit resources used to those set up by the company. The problem of access to the internet should not be underestimated as this was raised as a significant issue in one of the educational institutions studied. The problem was in part overcome by another agency providing broadband. This illustrates a major problem with the quality of connections in the fact that control and improvement is beyond the financial and practical capabilities of many institutions. Therefore, a programme of study has to conform to the facilities of all users at that time while it is necessary to continue to develop new programmes that can be used as connections improve.

Commercial pressures may affect a programme in the private sector. Reasons for the programmes' establishment and success ratings may become related to profit rather than individual development and personal satisfaction. Also, assessment systems that feed back into programme improvement for the learners appear to be underdeveloped where profit is a major criterion for success. However, despite these differences there are some aspects that are consistently present throughout all the case studies.

The reasons for some indicators being present in some case studies but not in others are varied and appear in some instances to be related to the public or private status of the case study.

There may be more than one way forward as illustrated by the rejection by the international company of the learner-centric approach using instead an equally acceptable educational approach based on innovation diffusion. The omission of the consideration of different learning styles in some case studies seems to be connected with a need for the procedures to be standardised to ensure uniformity of response to situations within the many branches of the private institution.

Where time management is not raised it may be seen as the learners' responsibility and successfully coping without external pressures seen as an essential part of the programme.

Alternatively, it may not have been considered important enough to be mentioned in the evidence available.

There is no evidence that cultural values are considered in any of the case studies.

The differences between the private and public sectors do appear to be sufficiently significant that where there is competition within the educational sector to offer leadership courses, following the private commerce practices without the incentive of in-house promotion, may not succeed.