



Context

This former NPQML participant works as a **middle leader** in a **large secondary academy**. He is second in department within a team of thirteen plus two technicians. The school has 1400 children on roll. The participant has worked there on a full-time basis for eight years.

Building up his experience and confidence was the participant's main **motivation** for enrolling on the NPQML programme. Having recently been appointed to his middle leadership role as second in department, he was conscious that the school was undergoing some significant changes, which would require **strong skills in leadership and management**. He was acutely aware that if he was to positively **influence change**, especially amongst older and more experienced members of staff, he would need to draw upon well-informed leadership approaches.



Learning about leadership

The participant names the **quality of facilitation** and in particular facilitators' knowledge about leadership and their ability to effectively apply theory to practice, as the aspect of the programme that he found particularly beneficial.

"I liked the way they had expertise in different areas and the fact that they could give a variety of tried and tested solutions for me to try out."

While he appreciated that **the reading element was beneficial and often pivotal** in moving his thinking on, he admitted that,

*"I'm not a reader, I'm a very practical person and like to learn by doing, so deliberately planning in time to read was really important. I did the reading ahead of time so that I had **time to think and reflect** on it before the face-to-face days"*

The participant also feels that coming together to learn on face-to-face days was very enjoyable. While he attended different sessions to other colleagues from his school also on the same programme, he found it incredibly valuable to meet up afterwards and discuss their learning back at school. Collaborating on the writing of the assessment was particularly valuable as they were able to share ideas and talk through various **examples that could be cited as evidence**.

He identified the relationship with his **coach** as purposeful and supportive. He gained great confidence from the **coach's feedback and their validation** of his work in school. Their strong working relationship proved invaluable when it came to completing the assessment task. He and his coach worked together to ensure coverage of all the indicators including **citing examples of evidence to support their judgements**.

He raised the fact that keeping a **reflective journal** was a new experience for him.

"I tended to make spontaneous and informal notes just for 5-10 minutes here and there."

While he noted that initially it felt strange to record personal feelings and musings on his leadership, he could see the value of this particularly when it came to completing the **self-awareness** section of his assessment form.

"Turning the informal comments into formal comments for the assessment was a little more tricky, but my coach was helpful here."

The participant feels that the **assessment task** related well to his 'day job' and he very much appreciated that it was not bolt-on but rather central to his core role.

"My assessment task felt manageable, it was really the day job but in a much more focused way."

He notes that **completing smaller sections of the assessment form on a regular basis**, as he went along, proved to be a valuable strategy and he would encourage others to do the same. **Drafting** various sections helped him to maintain a "leadership type mindset".

"... I probably did ten drafts of the form and it evolved over time. I always saw it as a work in progress which really helped."

Impact and influence

The participant feels that the NPQML programme has impacted on him personally and professionally, as well as on his team and the students in his department,

"It has given me the confidence to know what I am talking about."

He describes his new found confidence to **lead change** and to discuss improving teaching and learning with rigour and conviction. The participant notes that he is more assured in leading others and in **driving sustainable school improvement**.

"I feel I'm more discerning in identifying precisely what needs to be done. I can get the hub of things much quicker".

With regard to his team he is most pleased with his ability to **lead with credibility** and with the respect of his colleagues. The participant recognises that he has helped others to see the value in approaching things differently and feels that he can now hold his own in middle leader meetings, which are often characterised by strong values, beliefs and assumptions.

"Sometimes it's hard to shift well-established views. We don't always agree with each other but that's ok, having good quality professional dialogue allows us to move forward."

As a result of his assessment project the participant has also noticed **positive changes in the students' attitudes** towards the department. He believes that they have noticed an improvement in the quality of homework set and in the enhanced use of differentiation to meet their individual needs.

What next?

The participant would like to now spend time consolidating and embedding his learning from the programme

"I learnt such a lot, I want to spend time now trying it all out."

His school has recently become a Teaching School and the participant is also looking forward to getting involved in professional development opportunities to model good practice within and beyond his own school.

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