

Theory of change evaluation and the full service  
extended schools initiative

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# Theory of change evaluation and the full service extended schools initiative

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## **Abstract**

The evaluation of full service extended schools presents a series of challenges because, amongst other things, of the lack of a single model for such schools, the long-term nature of their intended outcomes and the complex processes through which such outcomes are likely to be generated. Previous attempts at evaluation have been inconclusive, partly as a result of these challenges. This paper reports the use of a theory of change approach to evaluation which focuses on articulating the implicit theory of how school actions are intended to produce a series of immediate and intermediate changes leading in the long run to end-point outcomes. It argues that such an approach is particularly useful for surfacing the taken for granted assumptions on which school actions might otherwise be built.

## **Background**

### ***The full service extended schools initiative***

In 2003, Department for Education and Skills (DfES) - the Government department responsible for education in England - launched a 'full service extended schools' initiative. This is aimed at supporting the development in every local authority (LA) area of one or more schools which provide a comprehensive range of services on a single site, including access to health services, adult learning and community activities as well as study support and 8am to 6pm childcare. The authors are part of a team commissioned by DfES to undertake an evaluation of this initiative which will be in the field between 2004 and 2006, with a view to reporting finally in 2007. This paper considers some of the methodological challenges involved in this evaluation. Full service schools are now an international phenomenon (Wilkin et al., 2003b), though their designation and details of their organisation and practices differ from administration to administration. In general terms, such schools are characterised by an attempt to provide a range of service to their students, to those students' families and to local communities over and above the 'core offer' of teaching within the standard school curriculum. Typically, providing these services involves collaboration with other agencies and the hosting of these agencies on the school site. Although full service schools can, in principle, serve any group of students and any community, they are frequently located in schools serving disadvantaged areas where the demand for services is high and where traditional forms of service-delivery have come to seem inadequate (Dryfoos, 1994).

This is certainly true of the FSES initiative in England, where the first wave of schools has been located in areas of disadvantage where an associated 'Behaviour Improvement Initiative' is aiming to tackle issues of in-school behaviour and relatively high levels of street crime. FSESs also conform to the international pattern in being expected to offer a range of child, family and community services in terms of childcare, health and social care, lifelong learning, family learning, parenting support, study support, sports and arts provision, information and communications technologies provision (DfES, 2003a: 3-4). Moreover, although the areas in which services were to be provided was specified in general terms by DfES, schools were encouraged to adapt and implement the specification in ways which met local circumstances. As tends to be the case with other similar initiatives, therefore, (see, for instance, ( Ball, 1998, Dryfoos et al., 2005, Sammons et al., 2003, Wilkin et al., 2003a, 2003b), the precise mixture and forms of provision differed significantly from one school to another (Cummings et al., 2005).

Significantly, from an evaluation point of view, DfES specified a range of outcomes which might be anticipated to arise from the provision of these services. Although there was no expectation that every school would produce every possible outcome, DfES guidance suggested that schools should look for outcomes in terms, amongst other things, of better access to local services, reductions in health inequalities, reductions in adult unemployment, improved staff recruitment and retention, enhanced partnership with 'the community', better supervision of children outside school hours, improved school security, greater parental involvement, improved local career development opportunities, improved student behaviour, attendance, participation, aspirations and attainment, increased student motivation and self-esteem and better access to specialist support for students (DfES, 2003b: 3).

Not only is this list both extensive and ambitious, it also comprises a mixture of different types of outcomes. Some relate to improved service delivery (in terms, for instance, of access to services) and might be seen as lying largely within the control of schools and their partner agencies. Others relate to enhanced processes in service delivery and use (in terms, for instance, of greater parental involvement or better partnership with local communities) and require some sort of active contribution by service users. Others again are couched in terms of what might be seen as end-point outcomes for students, families and communities (in terms, for instance of improved attainments or reductions in unemployment). However reasonable it might be to expect that full service provision would generate these outcomes, it seems that they are much less within the control of schools and their partners and, if they appear at all, are likely to be the result of relatively long-term change processes in which many factors, over and above the services provided by the FSES, would be implicated.

### ***Challenges for evaluation***

The list of possible outcomes from FSESs indicates some of the challenges facing the evaluator in this field. If we take into account also the range of forms of provision outlined in the formal specification and the actual diversity of provision on the ground, it is clear that the FSES is anything but a classic intervention, whose characteristics can be specified and the outcomes of which can be relatively easily identified. Rather, it is a multi-strand initiative, implemented in differing ways and forms in different contexts and aiming at a diverse range of different types of outcomes.

DfES as the sponsors of the initiative, the participating schools and LEAs as the local implementers of the initiative and the public more generally are likely to have a series of questions about something which is supported by public funds, demands a considerable amount of energy from service-providers and involves some potentially risky reconfiguration of public services. In addition to questions about the process of implementation, they will want to know whether it is generating its intended outcomes, at what level and for which groups these outcomes are generated, whether there are any perverse consequences, which particular forms of implementation are more and less effective and whether the initiative represents a good use of public funds. The usual way for evaluators to answer such questions is to devise a set of outcomes measures which relate as closely as possible to the initiative's intended outcomes and to try to establish (perhaps by deploying these measures before and after the implementation of the initiative, or by making comparisons between schools within and without the initiative) whether any of the desired outcomes are emerging and, if so, whether they can be attributed to the new form of provision.

It is clear from our examination of the DfES specification and guidance on full service extended schools that this classic approach is likely to prove highly problematic in relation to this initiative. The nature of the initiative as it has developed on the ground suggests that these problems are, if anything, greater than might have been predicted (Cummings et al., 2005). In particular:

- FSES projects are, without exception, multi-strand. That is, they undertake multiple activities which are likely to impact in complex ways. It is, therefore, difficult to know which activities or combinations of activities produce what outcomes.
- Projects are, without exception, located in schools and local authorities where many other initiatives and actions are in place. It is, therefore, very difficult to determine whether any outcomes result from full service provision, from some other initiative or action, or from some combination of these.
- Projects tend to be located in different contexts, to undertake different activities and to pursue different outcomes from each other. Comparison between projects to identify the most 'effective' activities is therefore very difficult.
- On the other hand, schools which are *not* FSESs may nonetheless in many ways be like FSESs. They may, for instance, be participating in many of the same initiatives, pursue similar policies and practices and, in some cases, may be developing variants of extended provision. Comparisons between FSESs and other schools are therefore problematic.
- FSESs may well have a history of extended provision which pre-dates the FSES initiative and the evaluation of that initiative. Comparisons between school outcomes before the FSES initiative is in place and after it is in place are therefore problematic.
- Projects tend to aim at outcomes which may take some years to materialise and are therefore difficult to capture in a time-limited evaluation.
- Projects tend to aim at many outcomes (such as increased community engagement with learning, or heightened aspirations) for which there are no robust measures and, in particular, none which lend themselves easily to quantification.

In view of these difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that attempts to evaluate full service school initiatives have proved somewhat inconclusive. Partly, this is because,

rigorous evaluations have rarely been attempted and researchers or advocates have contented themselves with enthusiastic exhortation and glowing case-study accounts (Dyson & Robson, 1999, Wilkin et al., 2003b). Partly, it is because, in such complex initiatives it is always possible to gather some anecdotal evidence which points to the short-term impacts of one or other school activity without establishing the long-term outcomes of the initiative as a whole. This is certainly a criticism to which our own evaluations of related initiatives could be subject (Cummings et al., 2004, Dyson et al., 2002).

However, even where evaluations have been well-conducted and have tried to focus on major outcomes, they have had limited success in identifying and attributing these. For instance, the evaluation of the New Community Schools initiative in Scotland (Sammons et al., 2003) was unable to identify any of the initiative's intended outcomes in terms of student achievement. An evaluation of a comparably large-scale initiative in Australia makes greater claims for having identified and attributed outcomes. The following is typical:

There was significant evidence of community level outcomes with nearly two thirds of schools reporting 'increased community awareness' (63%) and 'better community support' (63%). However, community development takes time. The evidence suggests a widespread pattern of developing community linkages between schools and agencies with a significant minority of schools at a well developed stage (an estimated 30%).

(Strategic Partners, 2001: 97)

On closer inspection, however, such claims seem to rely heavily on school self-reporting and/or relate to process changes rather than outcomes for children, families and communities and/or are about the prediction of long-term outcomes which cannot yet be substantiated.

An evaluation of a Chicago full service schools initiative found some evidence of improved student achievement outcomes. However, these varied between participating schools and could not reliably be attributed to the initiative because:

Many efforts were underway in each school during the FSSI period to improve student outcomes, and no simple causal links can be drawn between FSSI and improvement at the three schools.

(Whalen, 2002: 2)

In much the same way, the evaluation of the Children's Aid Society Community Schools in New York, among much evidence for process changes, found some evidence of improved academic and other outcomes for students but these seem not to have been consistent or to be unequivocally attributable to the full service initiative. The evaluators conclude that:

...community schools are complex systems making fundamental institutional changes, and the means that events occur in many ways and on many levels.

It is, therefore

...necessary to look beyond standardized test scores to understand the impact of community schools.

(Clark & Grimaldi, 2005: 173)

Examples such as these could be multiplied many times over. It is, of course possible that the outcomes which these evaluators are seeking simply do not exist and that full service schools are not capable of achieving the purposes which their advocates and sponsors claim for them. However, it is, we believe, more likely that the classical

evaluation methods employed by most evaluations (and, it might be added, employed over a somewhat limited time scale) are simply not capable of capturing any outcomes which may be generated by these schools. While it is undoubtedly a significant policy mistake to persevere with an initiative which is failing to generate its intended outcomes, it is an equally significant mistake to discard an initiative whose outcomes simply cannot be detected by the evaluation techniques currently being used. The need to find appropriate evaluation methods for full service schools in general and the English FSES in particular is, therefore, pressing.

### **Theory of change evaluation**

In this respect, it is significant that the Children's Aid Society evaluators referred to above have recently begun to adopt a 'theory of change' approach to their task (Clark & Grimaldi, 2005: 176ff). Such an approach is one of a family of theory-based evaluation approaches (Stame, 2004), the essence of which is characterised by Weiss (Weiss, 1995) in the following terms:

The concept of grounding evaluation in theories of change takes for granted that social programs are based on explicit or implicit theories about how and why the program will work...The evaluation should surface those theories and lay them out in as fine detail as possible, identifying all the assumptions and sub-assumptions built into the program. The evaluators then construct methods for data collection and analysis to track the unfolding of the assumptions. The aim is to examine the extent to which program theories hold.. the evaluation should show which of the assumptions underlying the program break down, and which of the several theories underlying the program are best supported by the evidence.

(Weiss, 1995: 66-67)

Some aspects of theory of change evaluation can look like classical outcomes evaluations and can be combined with elements of such evaluations (Weitzman, 2002). The current evaluation of FSESs, for instance, is indeed using standard measures of student achievement with pre-initiative baselines and comparisons with other schools not involved in the initiative. However, the use of such outcomes measures in theory of change approaches differs in two important respects from their use in more classical evaluations. First, the outcomes to be assessed and the measures through which to assess them are, as Weiss suggests, determined in relation to the explicit or implicit theories of change built into the programme, rather than being derived from some other, pre-determined frame of reference. It is, of course, entirely possible that the outcomes implied by the programme's theories of change will be different from and more extensive than those which are captured by standard outcome measures. It is also possible that the outcomes derived from implicit theories will be different from those from explicit theories, or that programme implementers will aim at different outcomes from programme designers. Theory of change evaluations, therefore, may be more sensitive to a wider range of possible outcomes than classical evaluations and may need to use a wider range of means for assessing those outcomes.

Second, and more important, theory of change evaluations view end-point outcomes as just that; they are seen as located at the end point of a whole series of hypothesised changes which link them back to actions taken within the initiative. The 'theory of

change' is an articulation of how particular actions are expected to cause immediate changes, how these in turn produce intermediate changes, how changes from various actions interact with each other and how in time this sequence of interacting changes produces end-point outcomes. Evaluation is thus likely to have three related but different components: the articulation of the theory/ies of change built into the programme; the tracking of the sequence of changes over time as the actions within the programme take effect; and the identification of 'end-point' outcomes (which, of course, may themselves constitute intermediate changes in a more wide-ranging process).

As Connell and Kubisch (1998) point out, this approach has a number of advantages in the evaluation of multi-strand initiatives set in complex contexts – of which the FSES initiative would be a prime example. It makes it more likely that the evaluation will focus on changes and outcomes that are actually implied by the initiative, rather than on ones which are easiest to measure with standard evaluation techniques. Student achievement outcomes, for instance, are relatively easy to measure in FSES evaluations, but an excessive focus on them may draw attention away from other outcomes that are less easy to measure though equally valuable. The approach potentially overcomes the problem of attribution since the articulated theory of change fills in the links between action and outcome, whilst evidence on immediate and intermediate changes substantiates the reality of those links. Moreover, by filling in these links, it is able to provide early feedback on the progress of an initiative and the likelihood of its generating its intended outcomes. Instead of a first phase of descriptive data and baseline measures followed by a final phase of outcome measurement, theory of change evaluations are able to provide an ongoing account of whether and how far changes on the ground are measuring those predicted by the initiative's theory/ies. This is particularly important where end-point outcomes are only likely to emerge some time after the evaluation is complete. Here, a theory of change evaluation can report whether actual changes match predicted changes and therefore indicate the likelihood of predicted outcomes manifesting themselves in the longer term.

A further important characteristic of theory of change evaluations is that they are dialogical in nature. Classical evaluations may involve actors in an initiative extensively as subjects and some of them may also be the sponsors who will receive the evaluators' reports. In theory of change evaluations, however, dialogue between actors and evaluators is essential in order to articulate the theory/ies of change. Certainly, evaluators can and must deduce some aspects of theory from the actions actually taken within the initiative. However, it is the designers of the initiative, its implementers and the intended beneficiaries who must articulate what it is they expect to happen as a result of their actions. This means that the evaluation process feeds directly into ongoing planning processes (Connell & Klem, 2000) as actors are encouraged to articulate not only what they intend to do, nor even what outcomes they are aiming for, but also how they see their actions as working.

It also means that the evaluation process is 'political' (Connell & Kubisch, 1998) insofar as alternative theories of change held by different actors or implied by different actions have to be surfaced and either reconciled with each other or acknowledged as competitors. The process of negotiating an agreed theory of change may itself contribute to the ongoing development and clarification of the initiative.

However, this political dimension also increases the repertoire of accounts which evaluators can produce of why initiatives do or do not generate their intended outcomes.

## **A case study**

As Connell and Kubisch (1998) argue, the use of theories of change is an approach to evaluation rather than an evaluation method. Not only does it require the flexible adoption of methods from other forms of evaluation (including classical outcomes evaluations), but the broad principles of theory of change evaluation can be and are applied in different ways to suit different evaluation contexts. In this section, we wish to set out how we have used this approach in the evaluation of the FSES initiative.

Our work has consisted of a series of waves of activity, each intended to clarify the articulation of theories of change and then to shape the collection of data in relation to those theories. As Mackenzie and Blamey (2005) point out, there is no established toolkit which can be used in surfacing theories. Where initiatives have been planned rationally (for instance, using Logical Framework Analysis or similar tools) and/or where theory of change evaluators are involved in the planning process from the start, theories may already be explicit. However, where this is not the case, evaluators either have to devise their own methods using whatever tools are to hand. Our own approach was determined throughout by the practical considerations of securing and maintaining access to headteachers and other local initiative leaders who were simultaneously managing multiple initiatives and responding to multiple imperatives. A process of recurrent interviewing, through which theories were progressively clarified and modelled, proved to be one which they found acceptable and, indeed, helpful to their own thinking.

Given the diversity of provision and practice at local level, we took an early decision to focus on the local project as the level at which we would try to articulate and substantiate theories of change. Some projects involved more than one school, though the majority were based on single schools. Our fieldwork began early in 2004, as projects were in the early stages of implementing their full service extended approaches. From the 61 designated FSES projects, we identified 22 for 'mapping visits' and 12 of these for full theory of change evaluation. Full details of methodology and sampling are provided in the end of year one report (Cummings et al., 2005).

The mapping visits and early visits to the case study schools focused on working with headteachers and other key implementers of the initiative to characterise the activities undertaken by the project and to identify the underpinning rationale for those activities. This was articulated in terms of:

- the situation which the key implementers saw themselves as facing (that is, the challenges faced by the school and the needs and resources of students, families and communities locally);
- the ways in which they anticipated that this situation would be changed by FSES provision;
- the intermediate changes they expected to emerge; and
- the actions which they were taking to transform the starting situation into the desired end-point situation.

Over time, a ‘mapping grid’ was produced which summarised the project’s responses on these issues. An example of one such grid, from ‘Keith High School’ is presented as figure 1.

**Insert figure 1 about here**

Although Weiss’ account of theory of change approaches (cited above) calls for theories to be set out ‘in fine detail’, our own experience suggests a somewhat different approach. We encountered a significant problem in the field. First, school personnel were keen to describe in considerable detail an initiative about which they were clearly enthusiastic. However, their accounts were not structured in a way that was easily compatible with our needs as evaluators. Broadly speaking, they provided us with a large amount of descriptive detail rather than a coherent analysis of the links between situation, actions and outcomes. Hence, their accounts of the situations they faced typically took the form of a long list of problems in the locality, with little attempt to order those problems hierarchically so as to show underlying causes and their effects. Similarly, they tended to list the actions being taken by the school rather than to present a limited number of organising strands and they struggled with the task of articulating a series of intermediate steps linking actions and outcomes. The links seemed to them to be self-evident and in need of no further explication. As a result, although school personnel were unfailingly generous with their time, it became clear that they had limited tolerance for questions which persistently asked them to organise their accounts in a more ‘theoretical’ form.

This difficulty no doubt arose in part because of the peculiar demands of theory of change evaluations and our own need to learn how best to work with informants in this initiative. However, we also suspect that it reflects the style of thinking demanded of practitioners who are routinely required to find rapid solutions to complex problems. Moreover, the current initiative-rich context in which schools work and the reluctance of DfES to impose any fully-articulated and theorised rationale at national level may also have played their part. In any event, we saw it as necessary in subsequent negotiations with projects to simplify and theorise what we had learned from the mapping grids and to offer them accounts of their own theories which they could amend or reject as they saw fit.

We therefore produced much simplified diagrammatic models of the projects’ theories of change, accompanied by deliberately brief textual accounts. These focused so far as possible on a hierarchical account of problems and resources in the starting situation, a summary of action in terms of principal strands and a summary of intended long-term outcomes. Examples of these from Keith High School are presented as figures 2 and 3.

**Insert figures 2 and 3 about here**

Finally, we returned with respondents to the question of how actions were expected to be linked to outcomes through a series of intermediate changes. Initially, respondents tended to find it difficult to articulate these changes with any clarity. In early interviews, they tended to focus on the actions they were taking and generally had little difficulty in setting out a number of long term outcomes which these actions

were intended to produce. However, they were often puzzled by the request to set out the precise links between actions and outcomes. There was a sense that outcomes were likely to follow immediately from actions and/or that it was self-evident how the two were linked. For instance, no explanation was seen as necessary for how opening the school up for adult leisure activities would lead to local people valuing education and transmitting this value to their children. One strategy we adopted to overcome this problem was to ask respondents to think in terms of the impact of the school's actions on particular individuals. So, instead of asking for a full articulation of the intermediate changes between adult leisure activities and valuing education, we asked respondents to imagine that the interviewer was a participant in one of these activities and to describe what would be the first thing that would change for the interviewer as a result of participation, what would happen as a result of the first change – and so on until a chain of consequences was built up.

On the basis of these articulations, we were able to discuss with respondents the sort of evidence which might demonstrate that any change in the sequence was indeed taking place. Where possible, we identified evidence that the school already had to hand or was proposing to collect, supplementing this by evidence which we ourselves could collect. The final product of the attempt to articulate the theory of change, therefore, was an evaluation plan setting out the main strands of action, the sequence of changes expected to result from those actions, the sorts of evidence which might demonstrate these changes and the practicalities of who would collect the data and when. An extract from Keith High School's plan is presented as figure 4.

**Insert figure 4 about here**

### **Some reflections**

The evaluation of full service extended schools is now in its second year. All of the initial case study schools have fully-developed evaluation plans and data collection is underway. It is, of course, too early to report substantive findings. However, the process of developing these plans has itself been illuminating and we wish to conclude by considering reflecting on what we have learned. These reflections relate both to the process of theory of change evaluation and to the sort of thinking in which schools engage when they plan their actions.

In terms of the evaluation process, it is clear that the role of actors in the situation as active participants in evaluation is something of a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it is a guarantee that the evaluation will be based on what actors are trying to achieve (or, at least, on the implications of their actions) rather than on some external frame of reference which may be irrelevant to their aims. For instance, heads and other leaders of local FSES initiatives have articulated theories of change which predict outcomes in terms of pupil some years down the line. However, they are aware that the success of their work tends to be judged in terms of short-term, year-on-year improvements in pupil performance.

On the other hand, participation introduces a number of tensions into the evaluation process. One, to which we referred above, is the tension between the amount of detailed work that is necessary to undertake a robust and finely-grained theory of

change evaluation and the tolerance of participants for committing the time and energy necessary to make this possible. A second is to do with the costs and expectations of theory of change evaluations. The process of articulating theories and collecting evidence of intermediate changes is time-consuming and costly. It also generates evidence the robustness of which derives from its capacity to support local theory. Classical evaluations are likely to be less time-intensive, less costly and more likely to generate evidence which has currency amongst practitioners and policy-makers. It may, for instance, be much easier to convince sponsors and funders of the effectiveness of an initiative by producing a set of performance statistics (however problematic) than by explaining and substantiating theories of change in terms of what can easily be seen as anecdotal evidence.

The active participation of actors in the evaluation also means that evaluating the initiative inevitably involves exploring the thinking of those who design and implement the initiative. It will be clear from what we have said above that the heads and other leaders we have worked with tend not to have found the demands of theory of change evaluation thinking easy to meet. There are doubtless many factors at work here, but it seems likely that one of these may be that the thinking demanded by leading the local implementation of an initiative such as FSE schooling is different from that demanded by the articulation of coherent local theories. Put simply, heads and other leaders are confronted by what to them seem to be self-evident local needs and have to construct and manage responses to those needs by using whatever is to hand. Typically, they will be doing so in a situation where this initiative is one amongst many in which they are involved, where they are subject to multiple imperatives and where there are real human challenges in persuading school staff, partners, pupils and families to move in the leader's chosen direction.

Such a situation makes rational planning difficult and probably calls for quite different skills from those of the strategist. The demands of theory of change evaluation rapidly expose a good deal of 'taken-for-grantedness' in actors' thinking. We referred above to the tendency to take the outcomes of actions as self-evident. We might add that the analyses we were offered of school contexts tended to take the form of a listing of local problems, not organised in any coherent or hierarchical way, that pupils, families and communities were commonly characterised almost exclusively in terms of their supposed deficits and that some problematic assumptions were made about the capacity of schools to bring about cultural change and the capacity of cultural change to overcome conditions of material disadvantage. These understandable characteristics of local leaders may well be reinforced by a policy context which emphasises the multi-dimensional nature of 'social exclusion' and the multi-strand nature of the responses that are needed (Blair, 1997, Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). Whatever the strengths of such an approach, it encourages thinking at a somewhat atheoretical 'need-response' level which may be particularly prone to taken for granted assumptions. Theory of change evaluation is, in principle, capable of surfacing and problematising taken for granted thinking of this kind – indeed this is, potentially, one of its great strengths.

However, doing this requires that the evaluators and participants have access to alternative theories and that there is some sort of productive debate between these theories. This is possible once an initiative is under weigh, though by then the die may be cast. It may therefore be that the theory of change evaluation process will be at its

most powerful where it begins at the planning stage of any initiative. As Mackenzie and Blamey point out in reporting their evaluation of Scottish Health Demonstration Projects (SHDPs):

...the ideal ToC is undertaken in the planning phase of an initiative. This is the point at which there is arguably more opportunity for the acknowledgement of gaps between aspirations and the reality of implementation and where individual stakeholders are more open to considering competing analyses of the problem and its solution.

The reality for the SHDPs, as with the vast majority of UK government-funded initiatives, is that external evaluation teams and project planners rarely have this window of opportunity.

(Mackenzie & Blamey, 2005):

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This, of course, is effectively a call for a significant reorientation of the role of evaluation and evaluators and for the relationship between evaluators and the designers and sponsors of initiatives. It is not simply that evaluation takes on a formative role, but that it becomes integral to the initiative being evaluated as a continuous inquiry arm of that initiative. The challenges of such a role are considerable, but the possibilities for genuinely 'evidence informed' policy and practice are exciting.

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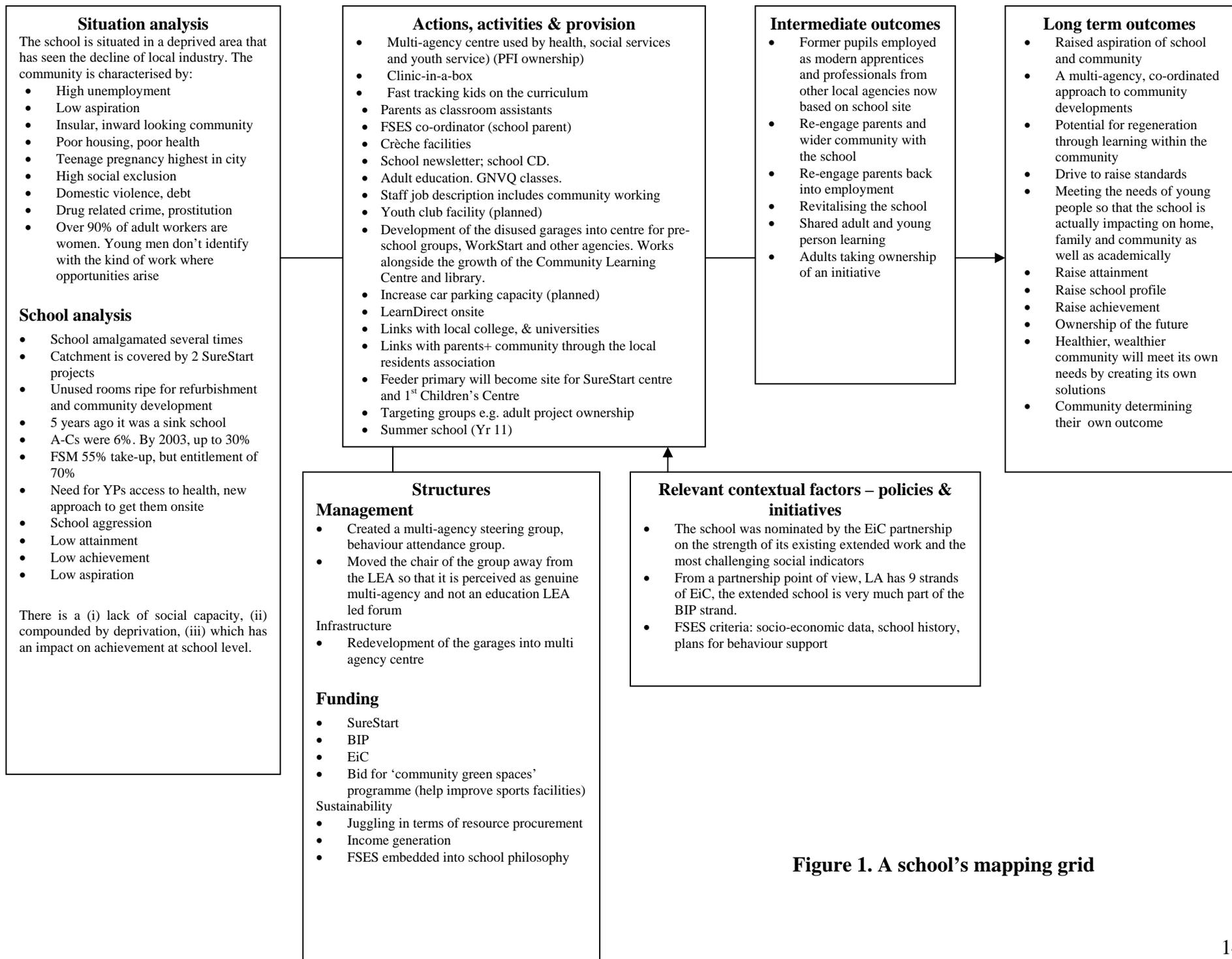
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**Figure 1. A school's mapping grid**

**Figure 2. Textual account of a school's theory of change**

Keith High School serves an area of very high deprivation characterised by poor housing, poor achievement and low aspirations. It sits between two communities, Hightown and Beverton, with high unemployment. Young men in particular do not identify with the type of work where job opportunities arise. Families do not want to live here, but get housed here, stay as long as necessary and then move on. Life expectancy is lower than the national average. The area suffers from domestic violence, debt, prostitution and drug related problems. Some parents in the community have, in the past, been brutalised by the school regime and are very reluctant to engage with the school. The school recognises it needs to address these issues with the help of social services and the voluntary sector.

The overall effect can be generalised in the following three ways – material costs (poverty, health, housing), cultural costs (inappropriate male employment expectations, teenage pregnancy, domestic violence, drugs, low aspiration) and school costs (low attainment, unpopular school, poor behaviour), with the latter perhaps a by-product of the first two. There is a lack of social capacity, compounded by deprivation which has had an impact on achievement at school level.

Keith School has sought to address this at a community level, by endeavouring to re-engage parents in particular, with the school, making it a focal point for change i.e. the parent as governor; the parent as FSES co-ordinator; the parent as teaching assistant, and the parent as 'achiever' whose success, it is hoped, will by example, impact directly on pupils and the wider community. In tandem with this, is the school's commitment to engage the pupils in a broad range of activities, which support and encourage them and raise the school profile.

By using the parent to complement the link between the community and the pupil, the school becomes the hub for change, raising community aspiration and engagement, and raising pupil attainment and achievement.

Figure 3. Simplified diagram of a school's theory of change

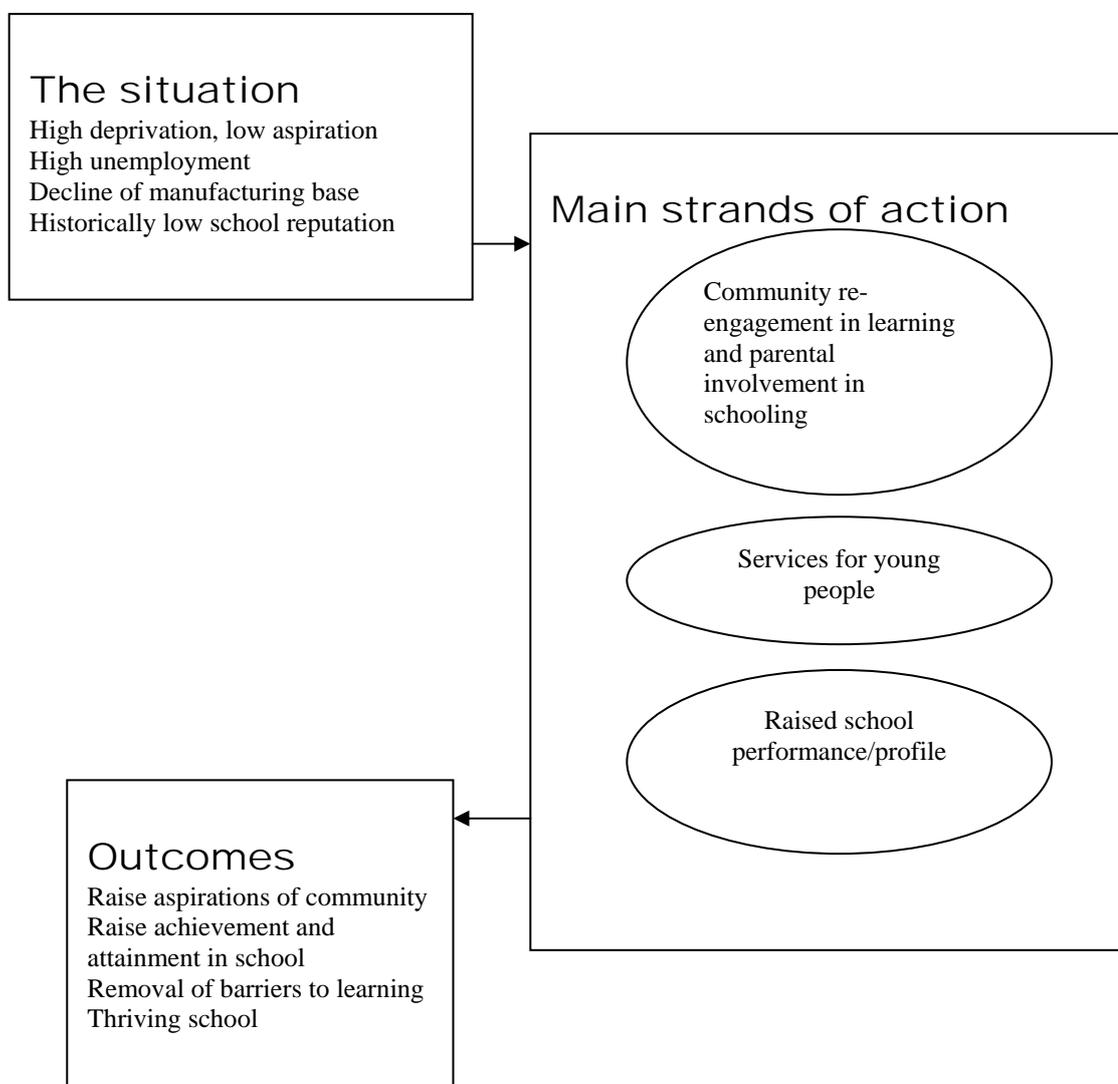


Figure 4. Extract from a school’s evaluation plan

LEA: Townville		SCHOOL: Keith High		EVIDENCE									
WHAT ARE THE PROVIDERS DOING? (STRANDS OF ACTION)	WHAT HAPPENS FIRST TO THE CLIENT (pupil, parent, family, community)	WHAT DATA SHOWS THIS IS HAPPENING?	Collected by whom			Format		Date receipt					
	AS A RESULT? WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? (STEPS OF CHANGE)	(SOURCES OF DATA)	sch	us	other	hard copy	Electronic		Collect by us from		deliver to us from		
							email	disk/CD	sch	other	sch	other	
STRAND 1: Community re-engagement in learning and parental involvement in schooling	The general community re-engage with the school through community links	Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community participation</li> </ul> Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community groups</li> </ul>											
	Hard to reach adults receive targeted support (eg via the Probation service)	Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Referrals</li> </ul> Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Probation service</li> <li>Adults on probation</li> </ul>											
	Barriers to learning are removed (practical eg minibus support, and personal)	Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adults (eg on probation)</li> </ul>											
	Aspirations raised (STEPS programme for parents, MATRIX award, Investors in Excellence for yp, parents, community members, professionals)	Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation</li> <li>Agency Targets</li> </ul> Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Parents</li> <li>Community groups</li> <li>Young persons</li> <li>Agency professionals</li> </ul>											
	Some parents begin to work in school (eg employment as TAs or voluntary work)	Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment records</li> </ul>											

		Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents (as TAs)</li> <li>• Parents involved in other school capacity</li> </ul>										
	Some adults helped back into the workplace by accessing qualifications on the school site ('Destinations' & WEA, Next Steps)	Data: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment records</li> </ul> Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employers</li> </ul>										
	Community thinks positively about the school as an environment for lifelong learning	Interviews: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School staff</li> <li>• Parents</li> <li>• Community groups</li> <li>• Pupils</li> <li>• families</li> </ul>										