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Out of school time activities and extended services in England: A remarkable experiment?

Abstract

England has a long tradition of schools offering extracurricular activities outside of normal school time. In recent years, however, a remarkable experiment has taken place through which these activities have been subsumed within a wide array of 'extended services'. All schools have been expected to make these services available to their students, to families and to local communities. This initiative has similarities to the full service and community schools initiatives in countries such as the USA. The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of these developments and to consider the issues that they raise. It therefore describes the development of extended services, explains the problems of evaluation in this field, and offers a brief overview of the evidence currently available for the impacts of these services. It argues that the evidence is particularly promising in terms of impacts on children and adults experiencing disadvantage, and that there are indications of wider impacts on school ethos, school standing in the community, and community well-being. However, the evidence for impacts on overall levels of attainment in schools is more ambiguous. The paper also points out that the purposes of extended services are not well-articulated, other than through an assumption that they constitute a means of tackling disadvantage. It argues that this assumption is problematic, and that the purposes of extended services cannot be considered separately from more fundamental questions about the origins of disadvantage, and the nature of an equitable education system and an equitable society.

Keywords

Schools; Disadvantage; Full service schools; Community schools; Out of hours provision

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Außerschulische Aktivitäten und Ganztagsangebote in England: Ein bemerkenswertes Experiment?

Zusammenfassung

Hinsichtlich des Angebots außerschulischer Aktivitäten blickt England auf eine lange Tradition zurück. In den letzten Jahren fand ein bemerkenswertes Experiment statt, in dessen Rahmen all diese Aktivitäten unter dem weiten Feld der ,Ganztagsangebote' zusammengefasst wurden. Dabei wurde von allen Schulen erwartet, diese erweiterten Angebote ihren Schülern und Schülerinnen, deren Familien sowie den örtlichen Gemeinden zur Verfügung zu stellen. Diese Initiative weist Parallelen zu Initiativen wie Full Service Schools und Community Schools in den USA und anderen Staaten auf. Das Ziel dieses Beitrags ist es, einen Überblick über diese Entwicklungen zu geben und Fragestellungen und Themenfelder zu betrachten, die sie aufwerfen. Im Artikel wird somit die Entwicklung von Ganztagsangeboten beschrieben, es werden die Probleme von Evaluationen dieses Feldes erläutert und es wird ein kurzer Überblick über vorhandene Evidenz für die Wirksamkeit dieser Angebote geboten. Die Autoren argumentieren, dass insbesondere die Auswirkungen von Ganztagsangeboten auf benachteiligte Kinder und Erwachsene evident sind und dass sich Anhaltspunkte für weiterreichende Auswirkungen auf das Schulethos, den Stand der Schule in der Gemeinde sowie das Wohlergehen der Gemeinde zeigen. Die Evidenz für Auswirkungen auf globale Leistungsniveaus in Schulen ist jedoch weniger eindeutig. Die Autoren weisen zudem darauf hin, dass die Ziele und Zwecke der Ganztagsangebote nicht adäquat ausformuliert wurden, außer in Form der Annahme, dass diese Angebote ein Mittel darstellen, um das Problem der Benachteiligung anzugehen. Es wird dargelegt, dass diese Annahme problematisch ist, und dass die Ziele von Ganztagsangeboten nicht getrennt von grundsätzlicheren Fragen über die Ursachen von Benachteiligung und die Beschaffenheiten eines fairen Bildungssystems und einer gerechten Gesellschaft betrachtet werden können.

Schlagworte

Schulen; Benachteiligung; Full Service Schools; Schulen unter lokaler Aufsicht (Community Schools); Extracurriculare schulische Aktivitäten

1.   The English experiment

The English school system[1] has a long tradition of schools offering extracurricular activities outside of normal school hours – a tradition which stretches back many decades. In recent years, however, a remarkable experiment (Cummings, Dyson, &

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[1]   The four administrations of the UK – England, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – have separate education systems. Although there are many similarities between them, they have become increasingly distinct from each other in recent years, and this paper focuses on developments in the system in England.

Todd, 2011) has taken place which has transformed historical patterns of provision. First, extracurricular activities have been brought together with other out-of-classroom services and activities, and have been aligned with the work of child and family services beyond the school, to create a network of so-called 'extended services'. Second, the patchwork provision in which each school made its own decision about what to offer its students outside the classroom has been transformed into a universal offer in which every state-funded school has been required to provide access to a substantial level of additional provision.

The purpose of this paper is to present an overview of these developments and to consider the issues that they raise – issues that are relevant, we suggest, both for the English school system and for school systems elsewhere. In the course of doing this, we will consider the crucial question of what the available evidence suggests about the capacity of extended services and similar developments in other countries (notably the USA) to make a real difference to outcomes for children, families and communities. We will refer particularly to the national evaluation of the full service extended schools initiative which was led by one of the authors. However, it is not our intention to present a full account of that or any other evaluative study, and readers who wish for such an account may refer to the more detailed technical reports we cite. Instead, we use our overview of the evidence to raise a range of questions about what extended services are for – and indeed, what schools are for. The paper will conclude by considering these questions.

2. The English context

Schools in England operate on an 'all day' basis, opening typically from around 09.00 to around 15.30, with an hour (sometimes less) in the middle of the day for lunch. Although, therefore, students are occupied in lessons throughout the day, most schools have traditionally offered a more or less extensive programme of extracurricular activities at lunchtime and/or after school. For the most part, these activities have focused on sports, arts and leisure pursuits, and on curriculum enrichment and extension opportunities. They have been staffed by teachers on a voluntary basis, and participation by students has also been voluntary. Since they have been seen as additional to the school's 'core business' of teaching and learning, no very definite outcomes have been expected of them, and few attempts in the past were made to evaluate them.

The tradition of offering extracurricular activities indicates a view, deeply embedded in the English school system, that schools should be about more than simply the academic development of their students. This view can be seen in two other traditions in English schools. One is the tradition of 'pastoral' work in which schools have taken an interest in the social and emotional development of their students, which in turn has often meant working with students' families and with other child and family services (Best, 2002; Best, Ribbins, Jarvis, & Oddy, 1983).

Another is the tradition of 'community' schooling, reaching back at least until the 1920s (see, for instance, Morris, 1924) in which schools have seen themselves as a resource not only for their students, but also for families and for the whole local community. Schools working in this way have typically offered adult learning and leisure activities to local people, and made their facilities available for community use.

As a consequence of these traditions, by the start of the last decade schools in England offered a rich – if somewhat patchy – mix of out-of-hours activities for children and adults, pastoral support for students and their families, and community access to buildings and other facilities (Ball, 1998; Wilkin, Kinder, White, Atkinson, & Doherty, 2003). The period of centre-left New Labour government between 1997 and 2010, however, saw a significant policy effort to bring this fragmentary provision together in a more coherent form, and to shape it to serve some of the key purposes of education and wider social policy. These purposes were defined in complex, not to say contradictory, ways. On the one hand, New Labour were committed to what the then Prime Minister, Tony Blair, called "an unprecedented crusade to raise standards" (Blair, 1999). In practice, this meant intensifying the broadly neoliberal package of policies initiated by right wing Conservative governments a decade previously, now familiar in many countries (Gunter et al., 2010) – including, amongst other things, the specification of rising expectations of school performance, high stakes testing of students, and the maintenance of powerful accountability systems to ensure that schools performed as central government expected.

At the same time, however, New Labour governments were concerned with what they characterised as 'social exclusion' (Social Exclusion Unit, 2001). In their view, some individuals, groups and communities were at risk of being excluded from the benefits that overall social improvement might bring. Particularly worrying, given the key role of education in ensuring social mobility, was the danger that some children and young people might be left behind in the overall drive to improve educational standards (Blunkett, 1999a, 1999b; Kelly, 2005). In response, New Labour governments launched a wide range of initiatives targeted at the most disadvantaged learners and the lowest-performing schools (Antoniou, Dyson, & Raffo, 2012). These initiatives included the formalisation of a range of voluntary extracurricular activities under the label of 'study support' (DfES, 2006). However, study support itself became part of a more wide-ranging package of provision in what were known at various times as 'schools plus' (DfEE, 1999), 'extended schools' (DfES, 2002), and latterly as 'extended services in and around schools' (DfES, 2005).

Each of these initiatives differed in detail from the others, but all involved encouraging schools to develop a range of services and activities for children, for children's families, and for local communities. By the time these initiatives had reached their final form, the expectation was that all state schools in England would by 2010 make available a 'core offer' of out of hours childcare, a varied menu of out of hours study support and leisure activities, support for parents, ac-

cess to specialist support services for students, and access to school facilities for community members (DfES, 2005, p. 8). Moreover, schools offering access to extended services were themselves seen as contributors to an ambitious 'Every Child Matters' agenda (DfES, 2003a). This took the form of an attempt to develop a coherent and integrated set of children's services in place of what were seen as the fragmentary provision that had previously been the case. The intention was that all professionals involved with children and their families would work together, regardless of their background and service allegiance, in pursuit of five child outcomes – being healthy, staying safe, enjoying and achieving, making a (social) contribution, and achieving economic well-being. To facilitate this, the social care and education functions of local authorities were combined, and structures were set in place which enabled health and other service providers to plan jointly with these new 'children's services'.

As schools' offers of extended services developed, they formed important delivery mechanisms for this broad children's agenda. The core concern of schools, of course, remained with their students' academic attainment – the 'enjoy and achieve' outcome in Every Child Matters terms. However, schools were also able to work more holistically with children on issues of health, well-being and social development, and to enhance their life chances by moving them into employment or the next phase of education. In addition, schools offered an ideal platform for accessing children's families and local communities, and therefore could act as a base from which educators and professionals from other services could work together on child, family and community issues. The consequence was that the role of schools and their position in relation to other services began to be reconceptualised in important ways as New Labour policy developed. The model of schools as relatively isolated institutions, focusing almost exclusively on raising standards of attainment and perhaps – if the teachers wished – offering a few somewhat peripheral extra-curricular activities was replaced by a requirement for all schools to address a wide range of child, family and community issues, and to play a full part in the local integrated network of services. This new model, the government declared, was about 'Twenty First Century schools", characterised by their commitment to:

- maintaining high aspirations for all children and young people and providing **excellent personalised education and development** to ensure that all are able to progress and reach high standards;
- enabling schools to play a key role in **identifying and helping to address additional needs**, working at the centre of a system of early intervention and targeted support; and
- providing a **range of activities and opportunities to enrich the lives of children, families and the wider community**; and contributing to community objectives such as local cohesion, sustainability and regeneration. (DCSF, 2008) [emphases in the original]

3. Extended services in action

This holistic approach, linking work in the classroom with out of hours provision and interventions with families and communities was not mere government rhetoric. Schools began to develop complex networks of provision. This description of 'Beresford', a primary (age 5–11) school serving highly disadvantaged housing estates, gives an indication of the way in which extracurricular activities formed just one part of an array of services and activities:

> Beresford created a family support team to offer rapid, proactive, integrated and nonthreatening support to children and families. The team included the head teacher and assistant head teacher, a school-based social worker, [extended services] and childcare coordinators, counsellors from a local voluntary organization, a community support nurse, a parental engagement worker, a clinical psychologist from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS), tenancy support workers and a domestic violence worker. Some of these workers were funded by the school, but many (such as the counsellors, nurse and clinical psychologist) were not. However, the school offered all of them a base in an annex consisting of some prefabricated buildings. The intention was that a wide range of support should be on offer to children, families and the wider community, in a form that was readily accessible, holistic and capable of being tailored to the needs of particular users…Joint strategy meetings were held, in which information was shared, assessments were made, decisions about appropriate involvement were reached, and intervention took place in a more coordinated manner than was usual in the local authority area.
>
> The school also put its energies into developing provision that was open to all rather than being targeted at children and families in difficulties. A programme of adult learning was introduced, aimed at parents and other local residents, and a crèche was made available so that parents of young children could access the provision. A family learning programme was introduced, and the school's study support and out of school hours activities for students were open to all. (Cummings et al., 2011, pp. 43–44)

All of this, of course, is in addition to vigorous efforts – stimulated by government support and scrutiny – to develop the quality and effectiveness of what was routinely available in classrooms.

In some cases, students, families and community members took advantage of just one or other strand of activity in schools such as this (Cummings et al., 2007; Cummings et al., 2011). However, it was equally common for children and adults – particularly those facing the greatest difficulties – to access a range of services in order to address the complex problems in their lives. As a result, the impacts of extended services tended to come from the cumulative and interactive effects

of different forms of provision rather than from any one service or activity alone. Cummings et al. (2011), for instance, report the case of 'Jenny', the mother of a student at Beresford, who had left school without qualifications, spent her young adulthood bringing up her children, and now felt herself to have reached something of a dead end. With the encouragement of school staff, Jenny took advantage of the adult learning courses offered by the school, did extremely well, and gained the confidence to go on to take more advanced courses at a local college. She also began to involve her children in her learning, bringing her daughter Julie to a family literacy activity run by the school. In this way, the whole family was affected by the services on offer:

> "Julie came in and took it all in when I did family literacy with her and her teachers said it gave her a lot more confidence in class to try new things rather than saying, 'I can't do it'. It's also improved her speech."
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> Jenny is also doing a first aid course at school also which, she says, is a 'useful qualification and a useful thing to know', and she attends the positive parenting classes because she wanted to learn more about dealing with teenagers and helping her 13 year old son who has attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). She said:
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> "It was advertised and I wanted to go along to learn more. We went over problems parents face with teenagers and as I have a son with ADHD it helped a lot. I now think more about looking at things from their [teenagers'] points of view." (Cummings et al., 2011, p. 45)

4. Understanding outcomes: The evaluation evidence

Jenny's story illustrates the potential for extended services to make a difference to children and adults, but also indicates some of the challenges in evaluating those impacts. In Jenny's case, for instance, some of the impacts are relatively easy to identify and even to quantify – her participation in adult learning courses and any accreditation she might have gained from this being a case in point. Others, however, are more elusive. What, for instance, are the relative effects on Jenny of the courses she has taken and of the personal support she has received from school staff (who, we learn, did much to build her self-belief)? How can her daughter's reported increase in confidence and improved speech be assessed, and are they the result of her participation in family learning activities, or of Jenny's own enhanced confidence? What impacts might be identified on Jenny's son – and again, are these the result of what Jenny has learned on the parenting course, of her growing confidence in herself, of the improvements in Julie's confidence, or of some interaction between all of these?

The problem, of course, is that multi-strand interventions such as extended services necessarily produce multiple effects through complex causal pathways that

are difficult, if not impossible to disentangle. Moreover, this is only one of the challenges of evaluating initiatives of this kind. Others include: the variability of the services and activities offered by different schools; the range of outcomes that different schools expect from their provision; the lack of readily-available measures for many of these outcomes; the lengthy time scale over which schools often anticipate their outcomes will emerge; the difficulty of comparing outcomes from extended and 'non-extended' schools, given that most schools have historically offered at least some elements of extended provision, and that all schools were expected to offer a full range by 2010; and the difficulty of comparing outcomes before and after the development of extended services in the same school, given that most schools have had some elements of these services in place for many years (Dyson & Todd, 2010).

Quite apart from these technical problems, there are also problems with the quality of the evaluations that have been attempted in this field, not just in England, but elsewhere in the world. Identifying complex, long-term outcomes from multi-strand initiatives demands evaluation designs that are high-powered, longitudinal, and therefore costly. In fact, most evaluations in this field are relatively low-powered and short-term, focusing principally on processes, or on a narrow range of outcomes (Cummings et al., 2011; Dyson & Todd, 2010). To make matters worse, they are often funded by the sponsor of the initiative and are exhortatory in tone, enthusiastically advocating the rightness of the approach rather than exploring its actual impacts and limitations. The consequence is, as one review of the international evidence on extended service equivalents points out, that there has been "little systematic, rigorous evaluation of the concept and its implementation" (Wilkin, White, & Kinder, 2003, p. 5).

Nonetheless, a series of evaluations of extended services have been attempted in England (often funded by government), and they give at least some indicative evidence as to the outcomes that such services might produce. These evaluations fall into two broad groups. The first of these comprises evaluations of individual activities and forms of provision that typically became components in the schools' extended services. So, for instance, there have been evaluations and evidence reviews of childcare provision (Churchill Associates, 2003; SQW Limited, 2005), of multi-agency teams based in schools (Halsey, Gulliver, Johnson, Martin, & Kinder, 2005), and of parenting support programmes (Moran, Ghate, & van der Merwe, 2004). Most of these evaluations point to promising outcomes, and of particular note are the studies that have been undertaken of out of hours learning and study support (Keys, Mawson, & Maychell, 1999; Kirkham & Evans, 2000; MacBeath, Kirwan, & Myers, 2001; Mason et al., 1999). For the most part, these have focused on process issues rather than on outcomes. However, an evaluation of study support programmes in secondary (age 11–16 or 18) schools demonstrated a range of positive outcomes, in terms of improved academic achievement, attitudes to school, and attendance at school. The evaluators characterise these impacts as:

- Cumulative – the more different forms of activity a student takes part in, the greater the effect on attainment, attitudes and attendance
- Incremental – participation in study support in one year influences attainment, attitudes and school attendance in later years.
- Widespread – both subject-focussed activities and non-subject-focussed ones such as sport and aesthetic activities influence attainment, attitudes and attendance. (MacBeath et al., 2001, p. 8)

Moreover, they see impacts as coming not simply from the additional opportunity to learn offered by study support activities, but also from the changed relationships between students and teachers, and the different understandings students have of themselves as learners in the more informal out of hours context (MacBeath et al., 2001, pp. 61ff.).

The second group of evaluations shifts the focus from the of individual activities to the overall impact of the full range of extended services offered by particular schools (see, for instance, Carpenter, Cummings, Dyson, et al., 2010; Carpenter, Cummings, Hall, et al., 2010; Cummings et al., 2007; Cummings et al., 2010; Cummings et al., 2006; Cummings et al., 2005; Cummings, Dyson, Todd, & Education Policy and Evaluation Unit, 2004; Dyson, Millward, & Todd, 2002; Ofsted, 2005, 2006, 2009). This is important because, as we have seen, multiple services may well be accessed simultaneously, and it is not impossible that there are school and population level effects from whole programmes of services that are different from the effects of services in isolation. Once again, much of the evaluation effort has focused on process issues – how extended services might be developed, managed, funded and so on. However, there have also been attempts to identify outcomes, most notably in the evaluation of the so-called full service extended schools (FSES) initiative which ran from 2003–2006 (Cummings et al., 2007).

The FSES initiative supported just under 150 schools – most serving disadvantaged areas – in developing a wide range of services for students, families and communities, including study support, access to health services, adult learning and community activities, and childcare provision (DfES, 2003b, 2003c). The evaluation attempted to identify the impacts of these services and activities as a whole rather than separately. In order to do so, and given the problems of evaluation in this field, it adopted a complex multi-strand design which generated a rich set of both quantitative and qualitative evidence. In the space available here, it is only possible to present its methodology and findings in outline, and readers are referred to a series of technical reports (Cummings et al., 2007; Cummings et al., 2006; Cummings et al., 2005) for a more detailed account. The evaluation design included:

- *An analysis of student attainment outcomes* using the National Pupil Database (NPD). The NPD contains individual-level data on the performance of all school-age children on national assessments and examinations, together with information on a range of demographic characteristics such as entitlement to free school meals (an approximate measure of relative poverty), ethnicity, gender, and spe-

cial educational needs. The analysis compared attainment outcomes between students attending FSESs and those attending other schools. A range of methods was employed in these analyses, including multiple linear regression, multilevel hierarchical regression, Analysis of Variance and the use of matched samples design.

- *Detailed case studies of 17 FSESs*, using theory of change methodology to identify and attribute a range of potential outcomes. Theory of change is an established approach to evaluating multi-strand initiatives in complex environments, in which evaluators work with initiative leaders to identify the outcomes at which their initiatives aim, and to articulate the intermediate changes that they anticipate will lead to those outcomes. Evidence is then sought both for the outcomes themselves (insofar as they emerge in the time frame of the evaluation) and for the intermediate changes (Anderson, 2005; Connell & Kubisch, 1998; Dyson & Todd, 2010). In this way, evaluators avoid searching only for outcomes which have ready-made measures, or which are imposed externally on the initiative. Moreover, because they are able to track the intermediate changes, they are able to predict outcomes that are likely to appear in the long term, and to attribute outcomes that do appear more reliably than standard input-outcome designs. For the purposes of this evaluation, the theory of change approach involved recurrent field visits to schools, aimed first at clarifying what the school was providing and why, and then at tracing the best evidence available as to the impacts of this provision – for instance, through interviews with children and parents, questionnaire surveys of participants in extended activities, and school-level data on student attainment, attendance and behaviour.

- *Cost-benefit analysis* (CBA) of 10 FSESs. CBA works by taking outcomes identified from other parts of the evaluation, and calculating the financial value of the returns to the economy (for instance, in terms of increased productivity, reduced welfare dependency, or reduced crime levels) which these outcomes produce. It also calculates the financial value of any resources used to produce these outcomes, and is thus able to compare these with the value of outcomes. This gives a very different way of looking at outcomes from the more immediate concerns of much educational evaluation with short-term improvements in attainment, attendance and the like. In this case, information on resources used was obtained through extended and recurrent interviews with head teachers or other school staff who were able either to identify costs precisely or to give informed estimates of them.

The evaluation identified a wide and complex range of outcomes from FSESs (a detailed account is available in Cummings et al., 2007, pp. 46ff.). In general terms, however, there was strong evidence of significant positive impacts on the most disadvantaged students, their families and other community members. The most convincing evidence tended to come from piecing together case accounts of individuals and families, and in these accounts the story of Jenny and her children (above) were repeated many times. Schools tended to concentrate their efforts on individ-

uals and families who were experiencing the greatest difficulties, and although the numbers of individuals targeted in this way varied considerably, it was not unusual for schools to report that they were working intensively with around 10 % of students and their families (see Cummings et al., 2007, pp. 69ff. for a more detailed account of the scale of impacts). By providing targeted children and families with personal support, practical advice, and new opportunities, schools were able to help them overcome immediate crises in their lives, and place them on different trajectories. As with Jenny, different aspects of the school's provision might be called upon in bringing about these changes. School staff (often non-teachers) who were employed specifically in a supportive role were particularly important since they were able to work with people individually, develop positive relationships with them, and find practical solutions to their problems. However, the capacity of 'key workers' of this kind for helping people tackle their problems was significantly increased because they could call on a range of services and activities in and around the school – linking parents to social work support, for instance, or encouraging children to take up extracurricular activities, or finding vocational opportunities for older students.

Since the clearest outcomes came from work with disadvantaged individuals, it is here that it was easiest to undertake a cost benefit analysis. This suggested that the benefits accruing from extended services were substantial, and that, although the investment of resource needed was also high, the financial value of benefits was higher. For instance, although costs sometimes exceeded £2 million, the value of benefits might exceed £3 million, and in all bar one school benefits substantially exceeded costs (see Cummings et al., 2007, pp. 136ff.). It was particularly significant that outcomes which were largely invisible in terms of standard school performance measures – for instance, preventing one or two students from dropping out of school, or reducing the rate of teenage pregnancy – might have quite large benefits in terms of returns to the economy. Moreover, these benefits accrued disproportionately to the most disadvantaged students and adults, meaning that extended services tended to be significantly redistributive in their effects.

There was also evidence that extended services brought about a change in school ethos – specifically, in how students saw themselves in school and how they related to the school staff. Where this occurred it was often attributable to the extracurricular activities available in school, and to this extent confirms the findings of the study support evaluation reported above. However, the change in ethos was also enhanced by the number of supportive adults in the schools, and by the emphasis which some schools placed on giving their students a place in decision making. There was also a change in some cases in the way people outside viewed the school. As schools became more engaged with their communities, offered services to them and opened up their facilities to public use, there were indications that communities responded by viewing the school more positively, and that families were more willing to send their children to the school. Finally, there was some evidence that, in time, FSESs were likely to have an impact on the cultures of, and opportunities in, those communities. Given the evidence that these schools were al-

ready impacting on families and individual community members, and that these individuals often 'spread the word' to their friends and neighbours, it seemed likely that more widespread impacts might materialise in the longer term if the school's provision could be sustained over time.

5.   Some caveats

These findings paint a positive picture of what might be expected from extended services. However, there are some important caveats to enter. For instance, although long-term impacts on communities were a possibility, an analysis of statistical indicators on health, deprivation and skills in the neighbourhoods served by FSESs showed no differences between them and other neighbourhoods over the three-year lifetime of the national initiative (Cummings et al, 2007, pp. 60ff.). This is perhaps not entirely surprising, given the difficulty of changing area characteristics and the insensitivity of the available measures to what were probably small-scale and localised changes. More significant, however, is that evidence of impacts on overall levels of student attainment was decidedly ambiguous. Head teachers were convinced that their provision was raising attainment, and could point to students who were doing better than they might otherwise have done. However, efforts to identify an 'FSES effect' on overall levels of attainment proved fruitless (Cummings et al., 2007, pp. 121ff.). There was indeed some evidence of a narrowing of the gap in attainments between the most disadvantaged students and their peers in FSESs, and this would be consistent with the focus of many schools' efforts on this group. However, since the apparent effect was small and evident on some measures but not others, it is difficult to be sure how real it actually was.

Likewise, there was ample evidence that schools could improve their overall performance on measures of student attainment at the same time as developing extended services. It was tempting to conclude, therefore, that extended service provision promoted school improvement, and a government analysis of improvement rates relative to similar schools outside the initiative made available to the evaluators seemed to confirm this (Cummings et al., 2007, p. 64). However, by no means all FSESs improved, and the comparison with other schools was problematic, given that FSESs were selected precisely because they served more disadvantaged – and hence lower-attaining – populations than most other schools.

In making sense of these findings, it is useful to compare them with findings from similar initiatives elsewhere. The development of extended schools is an international phenomenon (Dyson, 2010). In Europe, for instance, the integrated community schools of Scotland (HM Inspectorate of Education, 2004) and the 'brede scholen' of Flanders (Joos, Ernalsteen, Lanssens, & Engels, 2006) and the Netherlands (Bakker, 2010) have many similarities to developments in England. There is, moreover, a history in European countries of efforts to integrate a range of childhood services in and around schools (van Veen, Day, & Walraven, 1998;

Edwards & Downes, 2013). However, it is in the USA where 'full service' and 'community' schools, closely resembling FSESs in England, have flourished and, crucially, where a body of evaluative evidence has been built up over time. Typically, US evaluators enthusiastically report a range of positive outcomes similar to those we have set out above, but also including sometimes dramatic impacts on students' attainments and on school performance (see, for instance, Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Dryfoos, 2000; Richardson, 2009). For the most part, however, the evidence presented does not differentiate between the effects of full service or community school provision *per se*, and the effects of whatever else may be going on in and around the school at the same time as this provision is developed. It seems highly likely that at least some of these schools are acquiring new leaders, developing a new sense of purpose, restructuring their internal organisation, and reforming their teaching practices at the same time as they are developing their out of hours and community provision. This was certainly the case in the English FSESs.

Some of the more searching studies of extended service equivalents in the US would seem to support this hypothesis. The evaluation of the Chicago Community School initiative, for instance, found that, whilst the performance of participating schools was indeed better than that of non-participating schools, there was no comparable difference in the attainments of students accessing or not accessing the out of hours provision that was key to the initiative (Whalen, 2007). Similarly, evidence coming from the Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) raises questions about how far impacts on attainment are produced by additional services, and how far they are produced by more standard school improvement measures. HCZ is a wide-ranging initiative combining school reform with a series of what in England would be called extended services, into a sustained attempt to tackle educational disadvantage across a whole community and across the childhood years (The Harlem Children's Zone, 2009). There seems little doubt that attainments have risen dramatically in the Zone, but the suggestion is that this may simply be because of improvements in schools' core teaching and learning provision. The Zone's charter schools, for instance, perform much better than many other New York schools, but no better than other charter schools in the city, whilst individual students seem to do equally well regardless of whether they access the Zone's non-educational services (Dobbie & Fryer, 2009; Whitehurst & Croft, 2010). Both the English and the US evidence, therefore, makes it difficult to conclude that extended services and their equivalents have a significant impact on overall student attainment, at least in the short term.

6. Clarifying expectations of extended services

This is, in many ways, no surprise. The most powerful effects on attainment tend to come from interventions that are proximal to the learning situation (Hattie, 2009; Higgins, Kokotsaki, & Coe, 2011). Yet extended services, by definition, are con-

cerned with what happens outside classrooms and beyond the core curriculum. It is reasonable to expect that the availability of extracurricular activities might make students feel a little better disposed to their schools and might, in time, increase their confidence as learners. It is also reasonable to expect that intensive support for a family in crisis might make the family a little more stable and reduce the risk of its children running into serious trouble in school. It is, however, quite *un*reasonable to expect that services and activities of this type will produce significant gains in attainment across a whole school population in a matter of a few months.

However, if extended services are not a means of producing short-term hikes in school performance, what, precisely, are they for? This may seem a strange question given the very substantial investment that has taken place in England and elsewhere in the world in getting schools to broaden their role. Yet the reality is that the aims of extended services are rarely debated in any depth or articulated with any clarity. In England, successive governments have contented themselves with setting out a (lengthy) list of possible outcomes. The extended schools prospectus, published in 2005, for instance, lists no fewer than nine apparently disconnected 'benefits', ranging from improving attainment, to providing greater opportunities for school staff, to improving health outcomes (DfES, 2005). There is no indication of how these benefits relate to and interact with each other, nor of whether there is any hierarchy in terms of which ones might lay the foundations for which others.

Where purposes are more coherent, they tend to be articulated in terms of a 'dominant rationale' (Cummings et al., 2011, p. 35) which sees extended services as a means of tackling the problems experienced by disadvantaged children, families and communities. This focus is understandable given the concern, in England especially, that the most disadvantaged children and communities might be yet further excluded from the rapid social and educational improvements that governments expected to be experienced by the majority of people. Nonetheless, the disadvantage-focused rationale for extended services is hugely problematic, for at least three reasons:

- *First*, there is a powerful argument that efforts to tackle disadvantage at the individual or local level have repeatedly failed because they fail to acknowledge the massive socio-structural inequalities out of which local disadvantage arises (Rees, Power, & Taylor, 2007; Smith, 1987).
- *Second*, the disadvantage-focused rationale tends to be informed by a pejorative, deficit-oriented perspective which sees the deficiencies of individuals as being largely responsible for the difficulties they face, and is therefore comfortable with the idea that professionals have the right to decide what these people 'need' (Cummings et al., 2010).
- *Third*, this rationale overlooks the range of other ways of thinking about how schools might relate to the children, families and communities they serve. There are, for instance, schools in England and elsewhere which see themselves as offering resources to individuals and communities that are already doing well, or as building the capacity of disadvantaged people to shape their own circum-

stances, or as embarking on a joint venture in which professionals place their expertise at the disposal of local people rather than simply assuming control (see, for instance, Cummings et al., 2007; Dyson et al., 2002; Tymchak (chair) Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School, 2001; Warren & Hong, 2009; Warren, Hong, Rubin, & Uy, 2009).

In the light of these critiques, the English experiment with extended services, however remarkable in its scale and ambition, might best be viewed as a promising initial exploration rather than as a fully-worked-out approach to schooling whose outcomes can definitively be assessed. At the very least, if it is an experiment in tackling social and educational disadvantage, it needs more time and more support. Just as it is unreasonable to expect extended services to produce rapid hikes in attainment, it is also unreasonable to expect that they will break down established patterns of disadvantage and the cultural attitudes and resources that are associated with those patterns. It will take time for the individual impacts currently in evidence to accumulate into larger-scale change, and it will almost certainly need the work of schools to be supported and enhanced by a range of other social and economic interventions. The reality is, however, that this time and support may not be available. In 2010, the New Labour government was replaced by a more right wing Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition which shows little commitment to the extended services agenda, and is busily cutting the funding that made such services viable in the past. It may well be that, precisely because extended services and their equivalents are additional to the core business of schools, they are always likely to be vulnerable in times of political change and economic constraint.

Moreover, the English experiment is also incomplete because the question of whether disadvantage is the right focus for extended services has not yet been debated openly in this country, let alone resolved. This is, we suggest, not simply a matter of how effective school-based approaches to disadvantage can be, given the deeply ingrained inequalities in the English education system (Schools Analysis and Research Division Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2009) and in British society (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2010). It is also a more fundamental question of whether disadvantage can be tackled at all without a serious interrogation of the features of schools and society that produce it in the first place. This in turn raises questions about how schools can be equitable in themselves, how they can contribute to building a more equitable society, and how this contribution should relate to the other expectation we have of our schools. In this respect, the developments in extended services and their equivalents that are not simply about 'fixing' disadvantage may prove to be particularly significant, even if the extent to which they achieve their broad social aims may prove extremely challenging for traditional evaluation methods to assess. If, therefore, extended services survive the current unfriendly economic and policy climate in England, there will still be a long way to go before the remarkable experiment started by New Labour governments reaches its conclusion.

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