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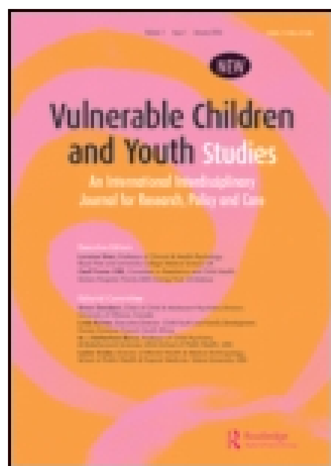

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Linking social welfare development with cash transfers and education to promote child wellbeing – what we know and what we need to know

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Linking social welfare development with cash transfers and education to promote child wellbeing – what we know and what we need to know

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This review aimed to identify international literature on the triple provision combination of social welfare services (SWS) embedded within programmes where cash transfers are conditional (CCT) on school attendance in order to inform best policy and practice. The review found only one example of such provision, descriptions of which indicated a benefit of the triple combination approach yet did not provide an in-depth evaluation of the link with SWS. More relevant evidence and indications for future research and policy were found within literature concerned with the double combination of SWS and schooling, including extended and full-service schools. However, this has not yet been linked to CCT. This literature reports an overall positive impact of a SWS and school integration for both children and families, while noting several complexities and challenges such as resource availability and management issues. Methodologies are currently diverse. A Theory of Change approach may represent an optimum strategy for future programme evaluations to address the complex synergies of inputs and outcomes. Also, the definition of SWS needs to be refined as appropriate to countries of the global South, where the triple combination is of particular relevance.

Keywords: social welfare services; cash transfers; children; schools

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Introduction

The benefits of linking different types of provision for the improvement of child wellbeing is now accepted widely among national and international policy makers. Instead of individual services being delivered independently, there is a consensus that complex problems require the added value of service synergies – linking services in a way that mutually strengthens their delivery and increases their impact. Combined impact pathways may involve just one service that enables access to another for a shared target population, or they may involve the delivery of a fully integrated mix of services. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) has made it clear that the necessary development of social protection worldwide must involve not only expansion of social welfare services (SWS), but also their combination with other provision, in particular conditional cash transfer (CCT) and education. This paper aims to inform the SWS, CCT and school triple combination approach by identifying and reviewing relevant available literature.

Arriving at a satisfactory definition of SWS is difficult, because the area of 'the social' (social welfare, social care, social support) is open to many interpretations and because what constitutes appropriate formal provision in this area is contested (Pinkerton et al.,

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2000). For the purpose of the review, the term 'social welfare services' was taken to cover a wide range of measures including: family support services aimed at strengthening family functioning, prevention of family separation/breakdown and early intervention for at-risk families and children; child protection services provided to children who have been abused, neglected or exploited; out-of-home care provided to children who are removed/displaced on a temporary or long-term basis from their birth family.

The first objective set for the review was to identify triple combination studies – studies of SWS embedded within programmes where cash transfers (CTs) are conditional on school attendance. In the light of the limited literature on triple combination studies, and given that SWS is the component of primary interest, studies of projects linking solely SWS and school were also identified. The second objective was to consider how successful such combined projects had been and whether there were key features of success that could inform future policy and practice. In addition, the review sought to consider what methods had been used to describe and evaluate the projects with a view to setting an agenda for further research.

Method

A systematic literature review process was undertaken to identify information relevant to the objectives of the review. The initial parameters set for the literature search included only material that focused on the triple combination of SWS, schools and CCTs. Variations of each of these terms were searched for in combination on library journal databases (including Blackwell Synergy, Sweetswise, Emerald, Springerlink, Ingenta, Sage Journals) and the Social Science Research Network (SSRN eLibrary Database), Google Scholar and Google general. Abstracts of papers published in 16 psychology, social work and development studies journals held by Queens University Belfast were also considered. Only English language publications between January 2000 and June 2008 which had ISBN or ISSN numbers were included in the search. Relevant 'grey literature' was accessed via a number of subject related websites – including those associated with the Department for International Development (UK), the International Labour Organization, the Institute of Development Studies (University of Sussex), Save the Children, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP, International Poverty Centre), UNICEF, World Bank, Eldis and Zambian Social Cash Transfer. A secondary review process was undertaken following the same method but including material that focused only on the double combination of SWS and schools.

Results

Literature linking the three types of provision

There are very few descriptive accounts or evaluations of triple combination provision bringing together SWS, schools and CCTs. The scarce literature available emphasizes schools as central to the triple combination. It is through the school setting that children, young people and their families are accessed for the receipt of SWS and CCT, which at the same time creates triple mutual reinforcement with gains in a range of child wellbeing outcomes. The best example of this triple combination in the literature reviewed is the Brazilian Child Labour Eradication Programme (Programa de Erradicacao do Trobalho Infantil – PETI). It has been both described in some detail and evaluated over time – although not against the performance of alternative programmes.

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PETI was set up in 1996 as a pilot project with 3710 children and then extended to other areas of Brazil in 1999, reaching more than 700 000 children aged 7–14 years by 2001 (Brazilian Court of Audit, 2003). The objective of the programme is to eradicate child labour that involves a health risk, while at the same time increasing educational attainment and reducing poverty for children who are living in households with per capita income below half the minimum wage (Rawlings, 2005). It provides cash transfers on condition that children maintain school attendance rates of between 75% and 80%, do not work, and attend an SWS-based after-school programme known as *Jornada Ampliada* (Yap et al., 2001). Funding from the central government goes to municipalities to cover the costs of running the after-school activities (Pianto, & Soares, 2004), while the State Social Assistance Agency (SEAS), which is linked to the Ministry of Welfare and Social Assistance (MPAS), is responsible for coordinating the programme (Brazilian Court of Audit, 2003).

A World Bank study (2001) that synthesized results from four evaluation studies found that they all showed the PETI programme had been successful in a number of respects. The programme had made it possible for poor children to attend school, hence contributing to less involvement in child labour; built community capacity through mobilization activities; helped to induce the development of health and other social assistance programmes; and made the participating children happier. Although the evaluations paid minimal attention to the after-school component of the programme, the World Bank report noted it as an innovatory feature that not only provided an important diversionary mechanism for ensuring that the children were not available for work after school, but also promoted further educational and social enrichment to their lives. A later study (Pianto, & Soares, 2004) also stressed that it was the combined effect of attendance at the normal school and at the after-school programme that had the impact on the reduction in child labour and increasing school attendance. The study did not control for any possible impact resulting from other programmes being implemented in the PETI programme municipalities. Another evaluation (Yap et al., 2001) noted that children participating in the after-school programme also improved with regard to school performance, although the specific mechanisms are unknown. Furthermore, while the after-school activities can be regarded as SWS, they do not cover much of SWS as defined for the purpose of this review.

Overall, the evaluations of PETI clearly support the triple combination of provision as an effective means of diverting children from inappropriate employment and improving child wellbeing outcomes. At the same time there are a number of recurring recommendations to improve the performance of the PETI programme. Most recommendations relate to the harmonization and standardization of the curriculum for the after-school component, standardization of criteria for hiring monitors for the after-school activities, resolving location issues to address constraints of distance to the after-school sites and better coordination between the departments for education and for social assistance. Thus, the SWS component requires better clarification and further development. Better understanding of the underlying mechanism of change achieved by combining all three forms of provision is also needed. The features of a successful triple combination pathway remain unclear.

Literature linking SWS with school

Due to the lack of literature addressing explicitly the triple combination of SWS, school and CCT, material on the double combination SWS and schools was considered. Discussion of the extensive literature on CCT alone, and on educational outcomes (see Farrington, & Slater, 2006; Rawlings, 2005), is beyond the scope of this review. SWS is

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the primary focus of this review and literature linking CCT and SWS is lacking (Sherr et al., 2009). However, the literature that links aspects of SWS to schools is growing and diverse (Katz, 2006; see Table 1). A variety of approaches and models are employed, varying by country/region, and the lack of clarity over terminology is clear (Wilkins et al., 2003). To help to evaluate this literature and hold to the particular focus of this review it is helpful to distinguish between 'extended schools' and 'full service schools'. According to the UK Department for Education and Skills (DfES, 2004), an extended school is one that provides a range of activities and services often beyond the school day, 'to help meet the needs of its pupils, their families and the wider community' (cited at http://www.infed.org). The literature from the United States on full service schools and in the United Kingdom on full service extended schools, by contrast, describes a more developed holistic approach with integrated multi-agency partnerships leading to 'mutual reinforcement' with gains in all aspects of child wellbeing. In parts of Southern Africa, this integrated, holistic approach is being promoted under the terms 'caring schools' or 'child friendly schools'. These developments are part of a broader shift in thinking that sees an inclusive and holistic approach to service provision as the way to addressing problems associated with social exclusion and multiple disadvantage – 'whole child/whole system' provision.

The final evaluation of the Full Service Extended Schools (FSES) Initiative in the United Kingdom (Cummings et al., 2007) found that the FSES approach was having a positive impact on pupils, families and communities. Pupils' attainments were improved, and the results were more evident for pupils facing difficulties. Positive SWS outcomes for families included improved quality of communication between parents and children and overall family coping (Cummings et al., 2007). Large-scale community-wide impacts were not (yet) evident. A study of Behaviour and Education Support Teams in England found similar outcomes (Halsey et al., 2005). The results of the cost–benefit analysis showed that both costs and benefits were high, but because the benefits accrued to children and families facing greatest difficulties, the investment in FSES was justified. The overall finding of these evaluations was that FSES did not necessarily have widespread impacts on individual pupils, families, communities or schools, but rather had significant positive impacts for a small number of particularly disadvantaged children. Children's access to professionals other than teachers also enabled the identification of broader difficulties than would be possible in a classroom setting. These lessons may be particularly relevant to developing countries, where needs are more pressing and fundamental for the majority of children. However, while Cummings et al. (2004) found that a school base offered other agencies better access to local populations than they could achieve in isolation, some of the pathfinder projects did not serve harder-to-reach groups effectively and had no mechanism of ensuring that they were included. An evaluation of the Caring Schools project in South Africa found that the project had helped to improve awareness of the problems facing schools, improve school attendance and achievement, increased confidence among children and improved nutrition resulting from establishment of school vegetable gardens (Nelson Mandela Foundation, 2007). Similarly to the FSES provision, youth facilitators identified needs that would otherwise go unnoticed – some as basic as the need for birth certificates, some as complex as trauma related to sexual abuse (Human Sciences Research Council, 2007).

Overall, the combination of services within the school setting showed positive outcomes. Success factors for these programmes include the multi-agency nature of teams, taking a holistic approach, pooling of skills, less bureaucracy and quicker services, the location of most interventions at school level, close working relations with school staff

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Table 1. Summary description of selected programmes providing SWS within schools.

Name of programme	Country of operation	Year started	Aims/objectives	Service components/key elements	Scale of operations (e.g. no. of schools/pupils involved)
Brazil Child Labour Eradication Programme (PETI)	Brazil	1996	Eradicate the worst forms of child labour; increase educational attainment; reduce poverty	Conditional cash transfers (conditioned on school attendance) After-school activities	700 000+ children involved by 2001
Extended Schools Demonstration projects	United Kingdom (England)	2001	To explore the benefits of and issues associated with schools offering a wide range of services and activities to children	Child care Parenting support Referral to specialist services	Three Local Authority areas
Extended Schools Pathfinder projects	United Kingdom (England)	2002	Test out a range of extended approaches and their potential impacts	Breakfast clubs; after school and holiday activities; family learning; adult education; child care; community use of school facilities	200+ schools in 25 Local Authority areas
Full Service Extended Schools	United Kingdom (England)	2003	To support the development in every Local Authority area of one or more schools which provide a comprehensive range of services, including health services, adult learning and community activities as well as study support and 8 a.m.–6 p.m. child care	Child care Health and social care Lifelong learning Family learning Parenting support Study support, sports and arts ICT	5000+ schools involved; all Local Authority areas involved

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Table 1. (*Continued*)

Name of programme	Country of operation	Year started	Aims/objectives	Service components/key elements	Scale of operations (e.g. no. of schools/ pupils involved)
New Community Schools	United Kingdom (Scotland)	1998	Increasing school attainment levels among young people facing underachievement; modernization of schools and promotion of social inclusion; early intervention to address barriers to learning and maximize potential; raising parental and family expectations and participation in their children's education	Extracurricular activities (sports, art and crafts, cultural trips); breakfast clubs; health promotion; personal learning plans; numeracy and literacy for parents; adult learning; community concerts	Started with 170+ schools, rolled out to all schools in Scotland
Behaviour and Education Support Teams (BESTS)	United Kingdom (England)	2002	Identification, prevention and early intervention to promote emotional wellbeing, positive behaviour and school attendance	Psychosocial, behavioural and educational support	140 teams operating in 87 local education authorities
Caring Schools project	South Africa	2006	To develop a model that can provide comprehensive care and support for learners (vulnerable children) in schools	Identification of vulnerability; health care; gardening and nutrition; child care forums; children's groups	Initially 25 schools, increased by nine and by 50 in 2007

ICT: information and communications technology.

and improved communication and linkage between homes and schools (Halsey et al., 2005). Successful engagement with schools may depend largely on the attitude of head teachers and the ethos of the schools, as well as the facilities and resources within the schools (Clegg, & Stone, 2007).

However, limitations and challenges were also identified. Progress may be hindered by hierarchical and bureaucratic decision-making in participating agencies due to multiple and overlapping management layers (Cummings et al., 2004; Sammons et al., 2003). There was concern among some agencies that schools were duplicating their services, and in some cases residents felt stigmatized by having social welfare personnel at their local school (Cummings et al., 2004). Wilkins and colleagues (2003) identify difficulties in multi-agency work such as issues of shared commitment, sharing of authority, and questions of autonomy for schools in decision-making. Furthermore, they identify challenges in funding and sustainability, work overload and differences in agency cultures, aims and procedures. The UNAIDS Inter-agency Task team on Education and HIV/AIDS (2004) warn that an additional role for schools can only be possible if appropriate resources accompany the changes to avoid overburdening fragile schools. Having schools as the core of collaborative provision can be a double-edged sword as, to a lesser or greater degree, it requires schools to manage multiple services and to prioritize among their respective demands.

In summary, the impact of school-based services appears to be greatest for disadvantaged children and those who might not otherwise have been reached, increasing school attendance and educational attainment and ensuring more effective links between school and home. Earlier intervention across a range of needs can relieve caseloads of health and social care professionals and justify the resource commitment by other agencies to the school. In providing these services, the key message from the literature is that there is no one best model to be applied in every situation (Cummings et al., 2007; Wilkins et al., 2003). Co-location of SWS in schools compared to integration avoids the complexity that comes with managing and implementing complex partnership arrangements, yet does not promise as much capacity to address the complex needs of vulnerable children. Attention needs to be given to normalizing provision within the context of the routine school day. Strong leadership is essential, as are enough financial and other resources to make programmes sustainable. While there is no blueprint to which staff at school level can turn for managing the challenges successfully, there is a need for central government to provide a clear policy direction and good practice guidelines.

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Research methodologies for future work

What is striking about the methodologies used to evaluate the PETI programme and the various extended school studies is the variety of techniques used, the scale and the tendency towards quantitative work (see Table 2), with the exception of a large-scale qualitative study of the PETI programme (World Bank, 2001). Two of the more rigorous, controlled methodological approaches was the experimental design of Yap et al. (2001), comparing outcomes for matched intervention and non-intervention samples, and a later study by Pianto, and Soares (2004), using survey data from the Brazilian National Household survey to create matched comparison groups. The evaluation of the full service extended initiative (Cummings et al., 2007) used a diverse combination of methodologies, including detailed analysis of 17 case studies; a statistical analysis of the National Pupil Database (NPD); a cost–benefit analysis of service provision in a sample of 10 projects; brief case studies of comparator schools not participating in the initiative; a questionnaire

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Table 2. Summary of methodologies used by studies reviewed.

Study (authors, year)	Major focus	Countries/regions covered	Methods	Comment on methods
Yap et al. (2001)	Evaluating the impact of the PETI programme on child labour	Brazil	Experimental design – comparison between intervention and matched non-intervention samples	
Pianto, & Soares (2004)	Evaluating impact of PETI programme	Brazil	Used survey data from Brazilian National Household Sample Survey. Used reflexive comparison and a matched comparison group to measure differences in differences	
World Bank (2001)	Literature review of PETI programme evaluations and assessments	Brazil	Literature review	
Rawlings (2005)	Review of six CCT programmes in Latin America	Latin America	Literature review	
Cummings et al. (2005, 2006, 2007)	Evaluation of full service extended school	United Kingdom	Mixed methods including: • Adopted a Theory of Change approach that looked for likelihood that certain changes could occur following particular actions in specific contexts • Case studies; statistical analysis of the National Pupil Database; cost–benefit analysis; study of comparator case studies; survey questionnaire of pupils, parents and school staff; questionnaire of full service extended schools	Results not generalizable due to variety of cases and variables studied and the Theory of Change used

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Sammons et al. (2003)	Evaluation of new community schools in Scotland	Scotland	Mixed methods: surveys at project, secondary, primary and nursery levels; survey of vulnerable groups of children; six case studies investigated through interviews, visits, observation and staff survey; document review
Clegg et al. (2007)	Evaluation of a child care taster pilot and extended schools child care pilot programme	United Kingdom	Qualitative interviews with participating parents and non-participating parents, as well as other stakeholders. Interviews repeated at different stages of the projects
Human Sciences Research Council (2007)	Documentation of caring schools to identify lessons and experiences	South Africa	Document review, observation and interviews with stakeholders in the project
Sadler et al. (2007)	Teen mothers enrolled in a school-based parent support programme and child care centre	United States	Descriptive design based on a volunteer sample of 65 teen mothers enrolled in a high school-based parent support programme. Data gathered through interviews, surveys, direct observation and record reviews
Dishion, & Kavanagh (2000)	Family-centred intervention programme embedded in a school setting	United States	Sample of 999 assigned to intervention and control groups; followed-up 66% of sample through years; used statistical modelling to compare patterns of behaviour

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Table 2. (*Continued*)

Study (authors, year)	Major focus	Countries/regions covered	Methods	Comment on methods
Britto et al. (2001)	Impact of a school-based intervention on access to health care for under-served youth	United States	Sample of 2832 students in six public urban intervention schools and 2036 in six demographically matched comparison schools. Used survey questionnaires, bivariate analysis, stepwise multivariate logistic models	Lack of baseline survey; high non-response rates, use of students' self-reports
Halsey et al. (2005)	Evaluation of behaviour and education support teams	United Kingdom	Two-stage evaluation involving telephone interviews in the first stage with coordinators and managers of the programme, and 92 field-based interviews in second stage with implementers in 12 case studies	Views of intended beneficiaries (pupils, parents, communities) not represented in the evaluation

CCT: conditional cash transfer; PETI: Programa de Erradicacao do Trobalho Infantil (Brazilian Child Labour Eradication Programme).

survey of pupils, parents and staff in the case-study schools and their comparators, repeated across 2 years; and a final questionnaire of all participating schools. In evaluating the New Community Schools in Scotland, Sammons and colleagues (2003) also used a mixed methodology including surveys with separate questionnaires at secondary, primary and nursery levels across 37 pilot projects and individual schools, and six case studies generated through visits, interviews, observation and staff survey. Documentary evidence was also collected, including school-level statistical indicators covering pupil attendance, attainment and staying on rates. These mixed evaluation approaches were justified on the basis of the complexities surrounding implementation of the programmes, whereby there was a wide range of variations in the aims, actions and resources drawn upon by the different schools involved.

However, the interaction between the extended school initiative and other initiatives makes it unsafe to attribute any outcomes to extended schools alone, and intended outcomes were diverse and difficult to measure (Cummings et al., 2004; Raffo, & Dyson, 2007). Additionally, programme variety means that it is difficult to generalize outcomes to other extended schools or even to a particular approach to extended schools (Cummings et al., 2004). In order to overcome some of the difficulties in evaluating extended school provisions, Cummings and colleagues (2005) adopted a Theory of Change methodology, involving the understanding and aspirations of participants that determined their actions and the outcomes they expected. The methodology therefore sought to understand links between complex contexts and outcomes, accepting that the issues were likely to differ from one school to another.

Conclusion

The purpose of this literature review was to identify existing descriptions and evaluations of SWS embedded within schools in areas where CCT are conditional on school attendance. What it has revealed is the dearth of such literature. There are no adequate descriptions or evaluations of this triple combination pathway, and so no identification of what the features of a successful triple combination might be.

The only material found related to the Brazilian PETI programme aimed at the elimination of harmful child labour through payment of a CT conditional on children attending a form of social welfare service after school. However, the accounts of the PETI programme do not consider the after-school component in any great depth, and it does not include much of what this review has defined as SWS. Far fuller accounts of SWS embedded in schools came from the extended school literature, but did not link this to CCT. Given that this review is part of an attempt to advocate greater governmental commitment to the provision of SWS, the result is perhaps not so surprising. If governments are not yet committed to the triple combination of CT, SWS and schooling, provision is likely to be minimal, undocumented and not evaluated. The challenge at this point is to search out where such combined provision does exist, document those programmes and evaluate them. Particular attention should be given to their design (especially the SWS provision within the combination), to staffing (training and remuneration), to location (on or off the school site), to resourcing (sources and sustainability) and to the cost–benefits, taking into account the full range of child wellbeing indicators. Both the PETI programme and the extended schools material suggest the need for more complex, dynamic multilayered modelling of combined provision.

Identifying, documenting and evaluating existing provision seems preferable to the alternative strategy of setting up demonstration projects. The reason for this is that the extended

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school literature, which seems the most helpful in thinking about the methodology of evaluating complex impact pathways, makes it very clear that these programmes need to be considered within their existing dynamic multilayered social ecology. The Theory of Change approach taken by Cummings and colleagues (2005) seems the most likely to allow for the required open systems evaluation (Burns, 2007; Katz, & Pinkerton, 2003; Patel, 2005).

It seems highly likely that provision combining SWS with schools and CCT does exist in South America, Southern Africa and Asia, and possibly to a considerable extent. The most urgent task for research in this area suggested by the review is to bring existing provision into the literature as a global resource. Finally, although the SWS definition used in this review is intended to be inclusive, the understanding reflects an Anglo–American experience, with its tendency to emphasize child protection and out-of-home care at the expense of family support. This perspective is under question in the global North, and there is an emerging developmental social welfare experience from the developing world (Patel, 2005; World Bank, 2004). That experience provides an alternative reference point that might usefully be employed in redefining SWS for future work.

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