

School Decline and Failure:



If it weren't so complex we would
have stopped it by now

Rationale

- ✚ Work in schools “at risk”
- ✚ Work in effective schools
- ✚ No research on the decline period or reasons

The children in the declining schools suffer significantly and the quality of their educational opportunities are compromised during this time of compulsory education. Each child gets only one such educational opportunity, is powerless to influence the process and should be entitled to rely on adults to ensure their school is functioning as an effective learning organisation.

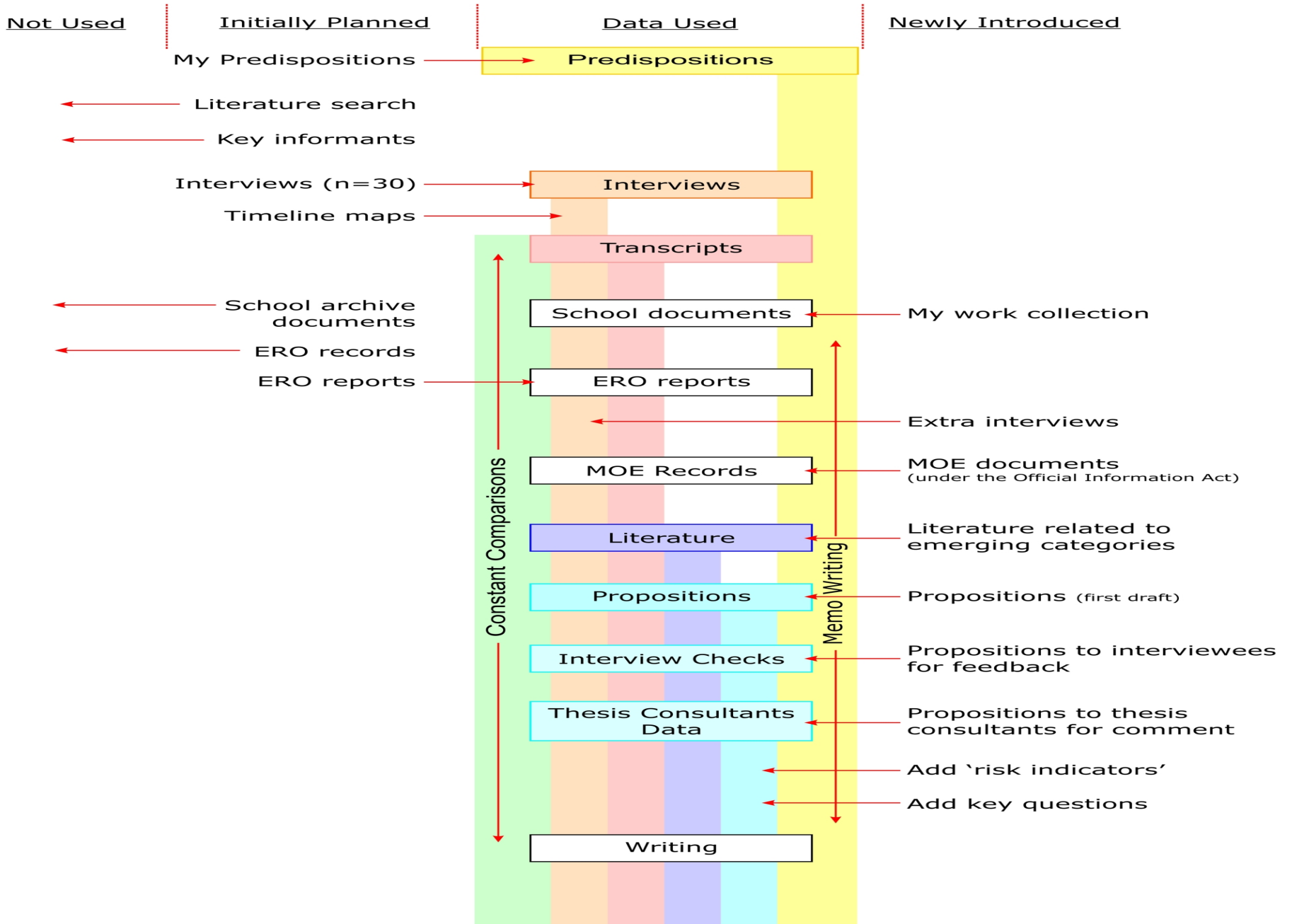
Hawk 2007



Methodology

- Grounded theory
- School selection
- Interviews with school personnel
- Propositions
- Thesis consultants

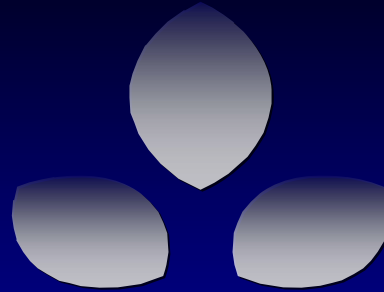
Data Strategies, Collection and Use



The reasons for school decline and the process of decline are:

- Complex
- Multi layered
- Interact with each other
- Unique to each school

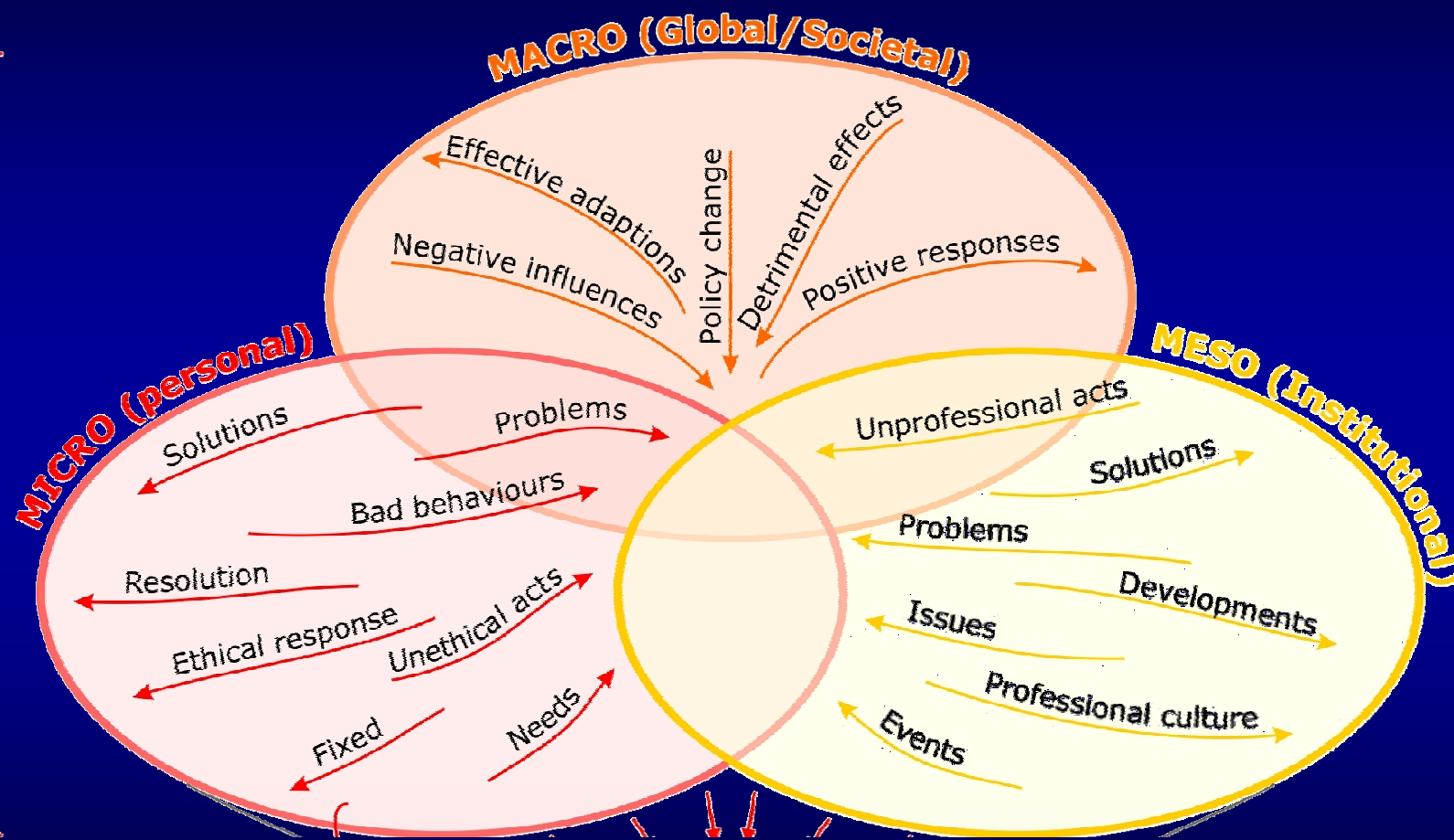




Influences and Predispositions



Influences / Predispositions



Macro Influences

- International trends
- Demographic and economic issues
- Societal values and norms
- Social movements
- Socio-economic status
- Government policy
- Community conflict

Meso Influence

- School organisation
- School culture
- Governance
- Competition between schools
- The media
- Ministry of Education
- Education Review Office
- PPTA
- STA
- Consultants and facilitators

Micro Influences

- Leadership
- Personal responses
- Personal agendas
- Students
- Parents

- Values
- Beliefs
- Attitudes
- Cultural capital

- Community relationships
- Norms
- Socio-economic status (decile)

Ethical & professional behaviours & responses

Students

- Awareness
- Morale
- Achievement
- Options/choices

Parents

- Relocate children
- Loyalty

- Leadership
- Appointments
- Trusteeship
- Professional development
- Professional behaviour
- Performance management

Neighbouring Schools

- Re/decapitation
- Cluster developments
- Competition

Decile Issues

- Poverty
- Family Dysfunction
- Student Achievement

Intervention

- Complex
- Difficult
- Expensive

Prevention

- Needs to be the focus



Schools can't stop or avoid the external factors.

The skill is not to avoid them but to adapt the best aspects of them to meet the school's needs



It is sometimes not possible to avoid or prevent the “one off” situations. They need to be managed effectively.



Strengthen

School culture

-  ethical

-  professional

School systems

-  finances

-  performance management

Community relationships

Appointment procedures



Strengthen

- 🏠 School leadership
- 🏠 Governance skills and knowledge
- 🏠 Relationships with the union branch
- 🏠 Professional development
- 🏠 Relationships with neighbouring schools
- 🏠 Decision making processes

Model

- Ethical attitudes and decisions
- Professional behaviour
- Seeking and using feedback
- Skillful fronting of issues
- Conflict prevention and resolution

Be wary of:

- Poor student achievement
- Insularity
- Ignoring issues
- Nepotism
- Staff longevity

Be wary of:

- Consultation
- Factions
- Being perceived to have favourites
- Staff resistance to change

Don't ignore:

- ❏ Poor teacher performance
- ❏ Student underachievement
- ❏ Personal agendas
- ❏ Staff career paths
- ❏ Bad behaviour
- ❏ Inaccurate or unbalanced ERO reports

When needed seek:

- External advice, support and development
- Early help
- Independent review/evaluation/appraisal
- Thorough diagnosis of problems

It would be easy for school personnel to think these warnings could never be relevant to their school.

All declining schools thought they were strong before the decline began



Key findings

- The reasons for decline are complex.
- Each school's situation is unique.
- Decline is hard to 'fix' once it is underway.
- Focus on ethics and professionalism.
- Diagnose reasons for issues fully.
- Deal with issues and problems early.
- Accept and adapt external influences.