Nick Hart

IMPACT

A FIVE-PART FRAMEWORK FOR MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN SCHOOLS

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A five-part framework for making a difference in schools

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Introduction: An overview of the impact domains

The chances are that if you are reading this, we share something in common: a drive to make a difference.

A difference to the children in our year group or phase.

A difference to the children in our school or community.

Maybe even a difference to children across the country and beyond.

We have committed to education because we want to make an impact. We want to influence what children learn, motivate them to do their best and inspire them to make a difference.

Middle leaders are involved in multiple interactions each day as they support, advise and challenge colleagues in their role of leading a subject or leading a team. Each of our colleagues' unique histories and circumstances make our interactions far more complex than the simple cause-and-effect relationships that we like to think exist when it comes to impact: *If I just get colleagues to follow the behaviour policy/use concrete manipulatives/model the writing process/scaffold difficult tasks, children will be much better off*. Each interaction with colleagues results in unknowable consequences, both desired and undesired, as we seek to bring about improvement.

Senior leaders make scores of decisions every day that directly affect the working practices of every colleague and indirectly influence outcomes for children. But this is not simple cause and effect either: *If I just organise the school in the right way and get everyone working together on the right priorities, we'll have a great school.* Each decision that leaders make has innumerable

consequences, good and bad, intended and unintended, predictable and unpredictable.

The school environment in all its glorious complexity is the reason for the 'no two days are the same' cliché but is also a difficult pill to swallow when we figure out that simple cause and effect just isn't realistic. Complexity in our phase or in our school cannot be simplified. It can, however, be somewhat mitigated by bringing stability, structure and organisation (Evans, 2020). Faced with such complexity, it would also be beneficial to bring more structure to our own thinking and behaviours, which is the central premise of the framework described in this book.

Whether you are a middle leader tasked with raising standards in your phase or a senior leader working on school improvement, you can make a difference in the five impact domains that form this framework. Paying attention to these domains and understanding the ways in which they influence each other can help you to make a difference.

Each impact domain is explored in the chapters in Section 1, which are as follows:

Climate: Leaders can make a difference to how it feels for colleagues to be part of a team and to work in their school.

Systems and processes: Leaders can make a difference to the culture of the school – how it runs in terms of professional development, the curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and managing behaviour at scale.

Colleagues' knowledge: Leaders can make a difference to what colleagues know and understand, including formal and hidden knowledge.

Colleagues' behaviours: Leaders can make a difference to how individual colleagues behave, including pedagogical behaviours and those related to interactions with fellow colleagues.

Outcomes for children: Leaders can make a difference to children across multiple classrooms, including (but not limited to) their academic and social development.

The impact framework: Structure of chapters

A mental model is the knowledge that one has and how it is organised to enable action. The impact framework is designed to bring order to leaders' thinking for the purpose of supporting the building of knowledge and improved decision-making. Each chapter is organised into the following structure:

- Why the impact domain matters
- The components of the domain
- Should the domain be evaluated?
- Building knowledge of the domain
- What could we do with the knowledge that we've built in this domain?
- Example scenarios
- Chapter summary

Why the impact domain matters

An explanation of the reasons why it is worth leaders paying attention to the impact domain.

The components of the domain

A description of the different concepts and behaviours that make up the domain.

Should the domain be evaluated?

A consideration of the reasons for and against evaluating impact in the domain. These sections reinforce a recurring argument for building

knowledge of the domain in order to gain an accurate picture in the spirit of inquiry, rather than evaluating to reach a judgement.

Building knowledge of the domain

Suggestions for how leaders can build their knowledge of the reality of school life within the domain related to a specific problem, including the use of measurement where it is appropriate. An important theme in this section is the difficulty in inquiring into the entire domain. School life is too vast and complex to inquire into a domain as a whole, so each chapter looks at building knowledge of a specific problem.

What could we do with the knowledge that we've built in this domain?

A description of the options that leaders have when looking to apply the knowledge gained to make a positive impact.

Example scenarios

A thread of examples for leaders that are built upon chapter by chapter.

For aspiring and established middle leaders, we will get to know **Tim**, a lower Key Stage 2 phase leader in a two-form-entry primary school. Tim has a particular problem to solve regarding improving fluency of calculation for the least advantaged children in Year 3 and Year 4.

For aspiring and established senior leaders, we will get to know **Madiha**, the headteacher of a large primary school. Madiha has a particular problem to solve regarding improving reading attainment in Key Stage 2, where children's phonological awareness is not an issue.

Through each chapter, we will follow Tim and Madiha's pursuit of impact as they tackle their problems one domain at a time.

Chapter summary

The impact framework is a tool to support leaders to make a difference in their schools. By using each chapter, readers can develop their knowledge of each domain, plan to inquire further into how each domain manifests in their school and ultimately resolve the school improvement challenges that need addressing.

Examples and templates

The final chapter provides examples of the impact that leaders might seek when addressing a range of common, specific problems. Editable templates are also available to download from the dedicate page for the book on the Bloomsbury Education website: bloomsbury.pub/impact. Each template is populated with prompts that leaders can adapt or delete according to their school's individual requirements.