

# Implementing a “whole-school” psychological programme: Implications for mental health provision in schools

*Dr Dite Felekki, Dr Josephine Scott, Dr Ayla Humphrey, Dr Anne-Marie Burn, Matthew Thomas and Dr Emma Howarth*

**Research Question:** How can a psychologically informed programme be implemented in a school context?

**Research Aim:** To explore multi-level influences on implementation of a programme of CPD using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as a conceptual framework

**Participants:** Education Staff  
Focus grp1: department leads  
Focus grp2: support staff  
Focus grp3: teachers  
Grp4 paired interview: Senior Leadership

Policy and Financing  
Budgetary Restraints leading to staffing cuts

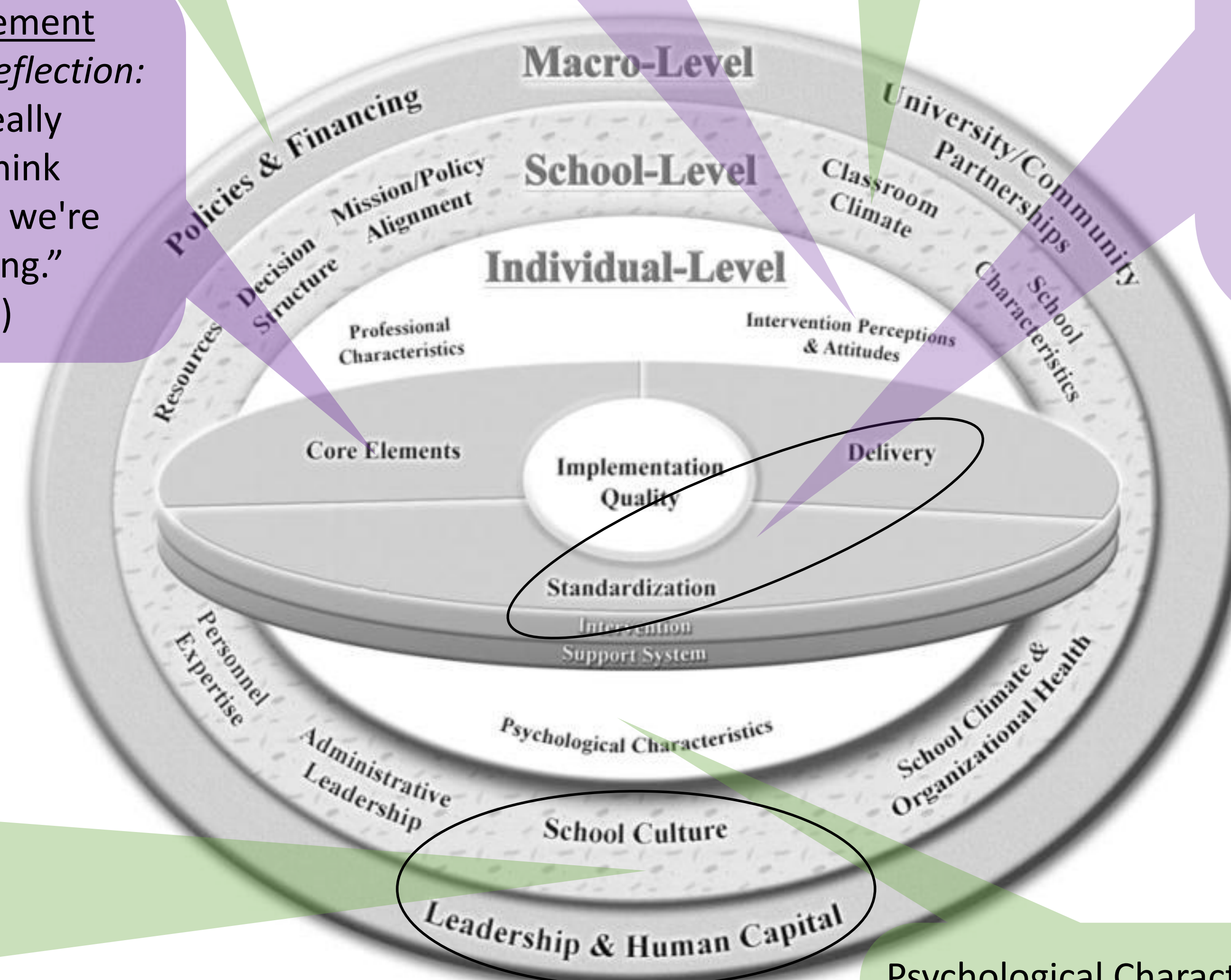
Perceptions & Attitudes  
*Conceptual framework too abstract:*  
“Initially I found it really difficult to get my head around...a bit theoretical.” (Grp4)

School Climate  
- Stress and staff burnout  
- Low morale due to poor results

Implementation Quality  
*Importance of standardisation:*  
“The consistency has lacked...some departments have done it better than others” (Focus grp3)  
*Importance of practical demonstration:*  
“...[the training day] was really helpful...a bit of a wow factor moment for the whole staff...looking at it in that way.” (Focus grp3)

*Importance of clarity:*  
“At the end of this year what will be different about what I do in the classroom; I’m not sure that was entirely clear.” (Grp4)

Core Element  
*Benefit of reflection:*  
“I think it really helped to think about what we're actually doing.” (Focus grp1)



School Culture & Context Before vs. At Evaluation

- School joined Multi-Academy Trust
- School Principal left half way into year – was key to success and leadership of programme
- Senior Leaders unsure of priorities – not able to drive programme sufficiently
- Support staff funding halved
- Dedicated systemic therapist post within school – funding cut
- Poor results led to change of focus/priorities

Education outcomes vs. wellbeing

**Factors that Can Affect Implementation Quality:**  
**A Multi-Level Model** (image from Domitrovich et al. *Maximising the Implementation Quality of Evidence-Based Preventive Interventions in Schools: A Conceptual Framework. Adv. Sch. Ment. Health Promot. 2008 Jul; 1 (3): 6-28.*)

Psychological Characteristics  
Psychological mindedness & internal locus of control vs. less cognitive flexibility & preference for more prescriptive approaches

Take Home Messages

- Several aspects of school context, operating at different levels are likely to influence the extent to which schools can change current practices or adopt new ones
- Need to consider competing demands within schools
- Importance of clarity, standardisation and tight delivery
- Need for reflective space in education

