

Teacher Resilience in Europe

A theoretical framework



The ENTREE project is informed by European and international trends that recognize the need to safeguard and promote teachers' wellbeing. It aims to enable teachers to build their capacity for resilience in the face of the increasing demands of rapidly changing school contexts and therefore aims to ensure quality education for all students. ENTREE provides a range of diverse learning opportunities to empower teachers to thrive despite

the everyday challenges in their work and to provide quality teaching and learning experiences for the pupils.

Through the use of a self-reflection tool, participating pre-service teachers and practicing teachers can personalize their learning by engaging in online and face-to-face activities to build their capacity for resilience. The activities are underpinned by a collaborative and reflective approach that fosters

the development of supportive teacher communities. ENTREE furthermore enhances teacher competencies and informs school leaders how best to support teachers developing resilience. The specific focus on teacher resilience enhances the quality of teacher professional development in Europe.

Context of the ENTREE project

A concerning number of European teachers are suffering from stress and burnout. Studies have shown that as a consequence, a large number of early career teachers leave their profession during the first 5 years. A significant number of teachers fall ill because of stress-related health disorders for longer periods of time during their professional life and many leave their profession before reaching retirement because of psychological and psychosomatic diseases. Given these issues, there is an urgent need for safeguarding and improving teachers' health and well-being, not only with regard to the quality of teachers' lives but also because there is a direct influence of teachers' health on the standard of their teaching. Why some people are able to deal with strains and stresses better than others is the subject of resilience research. Teachers who are described as resilient are able to successfully manage everyday challenges and maintain commitment to their profession, thereby also maintaining their effectiveness¹.

Resilience and quality teaching

Quality teaching has become a key focus for all stakeholders concerned about how best to respond to the challenges of globalization, sustainable development and the knowledge society. In this context, attracting and maintaining effective teachers who will teach to even higher standards to an ever increasingly diverse pupil population is critical². Teachers are confronted with increasingly complex demands under often difficult conditions which can have a negative impact on their health and well-being and as a consequence on their teaching. In this regard, teachers need to be psychologically and professionally prepared to meet the everyday demands of the teaching profession. It becomes obvious that a discussion on quality of teaching cannot ignore the key factor, 'teacher resilience'³.

Defining Teacher Resilience

Teacher resilience refers to the process of, capacity for, and outcome of positive adaptation as well as on going professional commitment and growth in the face of challenging circumstances. Resilience is shaped by individual, situational and broader contextual characteristics that interrelate in dynamic ways to provide risk (challenging) or protective (supportive) factors. Individuals, drawing on personal, professional and social resources, not only "bounce back" but also are able to thrive professionally and personally, experience job satisfaction, positive self-beliefs, personal wellbeing and an on going commitment to the profession^{4,5}.

ENTREE is focusing on enhancing teacher resilience in an increasingly changing school environment.

I always wanted to be a teacher and now I am ... and now - I don't know how long I can cope. I'm not prepared for all this.

(Valeria, Secondary school Malta)

Theoretical Framework in a nutshell

ENTREE is grounded in the belief that all individual behaviour is a result of the interaction between experiences, skills, knowledge and beliefs, and develops in interaction with the environment⁶. For early career or pre-service teachers that means entering the profession with a "backpack" of individual beliefs, capacities, skills and strategies that enable effective management of challenges they may encounter as they adapt to a new professional context. It is furthermore assumed that individuals can learn how to respond in resilient ways and that resilience can be enhanced over time by specific support systems and environmental factors.

Within this framework, teacher resilience is understood as a multifaceted phenomenon that results from the process of interaction between individual characteristics and contextual factors as shown in Figure 1.

Demonstrating resilience means using existing capacities (emotional, motivational, professional and social) and behaviour dispositions (e.g. strategies and beliefs) to handle (potentially



Figure 1: Teacher Resilience Framework

stressful situations in a way that the outcome is satisfying, acceptable or at least manageable. Teachers demonstrate resilience when they are able to draw on individual and contextual supports and use adaptive coping strategies to successfully manage everyday challenges. Developing teacher resilience is the shared responsibility of both teachers and those who contribute to the contexts in which teachers work.

I don't know how to cope with all these changes and expectations.
(Martha, Primary School Ireland)

Teachers who respond in non-resilient ways to challenges may show accordingly limited social, emotional, professional and motivational capacity for adaptation, may have counterproductive beliefs like low levels of efficacy and job commitment and may have limited support at school and in their personal lives which hinders them in dealing with situations perceived as challenging.

Teacher resilience has been associated with a range of positive outcomes such as job satisfaction, commitment, well being, enthusiasm, engagement, motivation, and efficacy. Furthermore, resilient teachers make a positive contribution to school communities and student achievement.

Without the support of my colleagues and my family I hadn't survived the first year
(Paul, Secondary school Germany)

ENTREE - About the Project

ENTREE is a project partly funded by the European Commission's Lifelong Learning Programme and is supported by an international team of experts from five European countries and Australia.

Project Partners

The project consortium unites researchers with different academic backgrounds from five European Countries (CZ, DE, IRL, MT, PT) and Australia. The Australian partners share their expertise gleaned from two major research projects on teacher resilience - Keeping Cool and BRiTE (Building Resilience in Teacher Education).

The Institute of Education of RWTH Aachen University, headed by Prof. Dr. Marold Wosnitza, is the lead partner in charge of the project's coordination and management. The ENTREE team of the Faculty of Education of St. Patrick's College in Dublin is led by Prof. Dr. Mark Morgan & Margaret O'Donnell. Euroface Consulting, led by Katerina Nevalova is a regional consulting and training centre located in the Czech Republic with much expertise and experience in using information technologies and developing E-Learning courses. The EuroCentre for Educational Resilience and Social and Emotional Health at the University of Malta and its Director Prof. Dr. Carmel Cefai is the third partner of the consortium.

The Centre for Practical Teacher Training (ZfsL) Jülich is an institution of initial teacher training. Dr. Matthias Henkel, head of the Department for Secondary Higher Schools, leads the team at ZfsL. ISPA (Higher Institute of Applied Psychology), located in Lisbon, is the oldest school of psychology and is the Portuguese Partner. Prof. Francisco Peixoto, vice-rector of ISPA heads the Portuguese team of researchers.

A/Prof Dr. Susan Beltman from Curtin University and Dr. Caroline Mansfield from Murdoch University support the ENTREE consortium as non European partners from Perth, Australia.

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Partner Projects

