



## Review

## Building resilience in teacher education: An evidenced informed framework

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## H I G H L I G H T S

- Presents an evidence-based framework for building resilience in teacher education.
- Reviews literature over 15 years identifying key factors associated with teacher resilience.
- Identifies personal and contextual resources, strategies and outcomes of the resilience process.
- Discusses implementation possibilities in teacher education.

## A R T I C L E I N F O

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## A B S T R A C T

This paper proposes a framework for building resilience in teacher education. The framework is informed by a focused review of relevant literature to determine factors that may be addressed in teacher education to support teacher resilience and ways in which this may occur. Findings show that personal and contextual resources along with use of particular strategies all contribute to resilience outcomes and that many of these can be developed in teacher education. Using these findings, a comprehensive resilience framework is proposed with five overarching themes - understanding resilience, relationships, well-being, motivation and emotions. Implementation possibilities are discussed.

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## 1. Introduction

A desired outcome of teacher education programs is to develop graduates who will be high quality teachers, experiencing job satisfaction and enjoyment in their work as well as maintaining their motivation, commitment and enthusiasm for many years. While this outcome may be realised for some graduates, internationally there is concern in some countries (such as the United Kingdom, United States and Australia) about rates of teacher attrition. The first five years of a teacher's career may be a time of particular vulnerability, with estimates of 40–50% of early career teachers in many countries leaving the profession during that time (Gallant & Riley, 2014). Studies exploring why teachers leave have pointed to teacher stress and burnout (Kyriacou, 2011; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005) and inadequate pre-service preparation for the reality of teachers' work (Demetriou, Wilson, & Winterbottom, 2009).

An alternative approach to the issue of teacher attrition has been to focus on why teachers remain in the profession, the factors that sustain them, the resources they harness to navigate through challenges, and consequently how they may develop resilience and thrive rather than simply survive in their work (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011). This change is in line with other broad movements such as the positive psychology literature (see, for example, Reivich, Seligman, & McBride, 2011; Yates & Masten, 2004). Research projects focussing specifically on teacher resilience have been conducted in the United Kingdom (e.g. Sammons et al., 2007), Ireland (e.g. Morgan, 2011), Australia (e.g. Johnson et al., 2014; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012), Europe (e.g. Wosnitza et al., 2013) and South Africa (e.g. Ebersöhn, 2012; 2014). Internationally, there is consensus that particular personal resources (e.g. motivation, social and emotional competence) and use of coping strategies (e.g. problem solving, goal setting, maintaining work-life balance) enable teachers to demonstrate resilience.

While research has identified many personal and contextual resources that are important for teacher resilience, and recommendations have been made at the individual, school and system levels (see, for example, Day & Gu, 2014; Johnson et al., 2014), fewer studies point to specific ways teacher education may make a positive contribution to the development of teacher resilience. Some suggestions about content and learning experiences in teacher education have been made (see, for example, Castro, Kelly, & Shih, 2010), but studies of teacher resilience at the pre-service level are limited. While it is acknowledged that the resources teachers use to enable resilience are influenced by life experience and career stage, there seems to be agreement that teacher education may play a critical role in the resilience process. Day and Gu (2014) have cogently argued that: “efforts to increase the quality of teaching

and raise standards of learning and achievement for all pupils must focus on efforts to build, sustain and renew teacher resilience, and that these efforts must take place in initial teacher training” (p. 22).

Even so, given the complexity and multifaceted nature of resilience, how this might occur and the specific possibilities for teacher education remain unclear. The aim of this paper is to propose a framework for building resilience in teacher education. To ensure the framework is informed by current research, the starting point is a review of teacher resilience literature to clarify the significance of teacher resilience, identify the factors that have been shown to be important for teacher resilience and draw together the implications for teacher education. These findings are then used to develop a comprehensive, evidence-based framework for teacher education. Possibilities for operationalisation of the framework are discussed.

### 1.1. Teacher quality, teacher education and resilience

It has been argued that teacher resilience is a ‘quality retention’ issue (Day & Gu, 2010) with retention of committed, engaged and motivated teachers who, regardless of career stage, continue to develop professionally and maximise their capacity to provide high quality teaching. A large research project in the UK found that where teachers were committed and resilient, their students were more likely to attain levels at or above those expected in the UK national testing program (Day, 2008), and that individual teacher characteristics mattered more in accounting for differences in pupil progress than did characteristics of schools (Sammons et al., 2007). Resilient teachers have been described as those who have the capacity to thrive in difficult circumstances, are skilled in behaviour management, able to empathise with difficult students, able to restrain negative emotions and focus on the positive, experience a sense of pride and fulfilment and increased commitment to their school and profession (Howard & Johnson, 2004).

Teacher quality has also recently been placed at the forefront of educational initiatives concerning student outcomes, teacher accountability and ongoing professional learning in many countries. To improve teacher quality, governments have mandated reforms in teacher education and trialled alternative approaches to teacher training. Standards for teaching have been developed and teacher education providers have been required to meet particular accreditation requirements. Research highlights the importance of resilience in teacher quality (Day & Gu, 2014), yet often teacher resilience and wellbeing do not feature in such reforms.

To provide context for the work undertaken in this paper, the situation of teacher education in Australia illustrates some of the above key issues. In Australia, like many countries, teacher accountability measures have increased along with national regulation of teacher education and the teaching profession (Mayer,

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