

Chapter 1

Cultivating Teacher Resilience: Introduction



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Abstract This volume brings together a programme of research focused on teacher resilience and includes chapters from conceptual, empirical and applied perspectives. The inspiration for this volume stems from two Australian projects: *Building Resilience in Teacher Education (BRiTE)* and the subsequent Australian Learning and Teaching Fellowship, *Staying BRiTE: Promoting Resilience in Higher Education*. The chapters follow the journey of interrelated research that has grown across Australia and internationally, highlighting a range of approaches, applications and impact. Each chapter draws on particular aspects of teacher resilience and emphasises the importance of context in cultivating resilience at a range of teacher career stages. Future directions broadening the programme of research are also explored.

Keywords Teacher resilience · Teacher education · Teacher wellbeing · Pre-service teachers

1.1 Overview

The programme of research that has inspired this volume stems from two unique Australian projects — “*BRiTE: Building Resilience in Teacher Education*” (Mansfield et al. 2016a) and the following Australian Learning and Teaching Fellowship, “*Staying BRiTE: Promoting Resilience in Higher Education*” (Mansfield 2016). Both projects involved teams of teacher educators across Australia and shared the aim of supporting pre-service teachers’ development of resilience-related skills and strategies, through experiential and online learning.

There were two main outcomes of the BRiTE project: (a) a conceptual framework of teacher resilience (Mansfield et al. 2016b), which informed (b) the creation

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of five online learning modules to support teacher resilience (Building resilience, Relationships, Wellbeing, Taking initiative and Emotions) (see Chap. 3). The initial uptake of the modules across Australia was significant and the widespread interest in the work was the basis for the *Staying BRiTE* Fellowship, involving a collaborative team of teacher educators from five universities who worked to embed resilience skills and strategies in their respective teacher education programmes (see Chap. 3).

Since the dissemination of outcomes from both projects, the work has broadened its impact and this can be seen through the consistently increasing number of BRiTE module users and interest from teacher educators in Australia and internationally. For example, the BRiTE modules are embedded in teacher education programmes in Australia (Chaps. 4 and 5), have inspired studies in the United States (Chap. 6), The Netherlands (Chap. 9) and together with the related European project (ENTREE: Enhancing Teacher Resilience in Europe, <http://www.entree-online.eu/>) studies in Portugal (Chap. 7) and Spain (Chap. 8). The work has also been integrated with augmented reality experiences for pre-service teachers (Chap. 15) and inspired an online mindfulness module (Chap. 10). Further, the theme of teacher resilience has also been addressed in studies concerning school principals (Chap. 12), early career casual teachers (Chap. 13) and teacher educators (Chap. 17) The increased emphasis on teacher and principal wellbeing in the profession (e.g. Riley 2014; Schleicher 2018; Turner and Theilking 2019) is reflected in the work presented in Chaps. 11 and 14.

The three sections of the book follow the development of this programme of research, first by laying the foundations, then illustrating approaches to implementing and applying resilience learning in a range of contexts, and finally presenting chapters that may hold potential directions for future research. The volume also includes three poems, written by Sharon McDonough. Each poem illustrates aspects of resilience and provides thoughtful reflection on the experience of resilience and the ensuing growth. The chapters report empirical work using a range of methodologies, conceptual discussions drawing on useful theories for understanding resilience, and applications of resilience learning into pre-service teacher education and in-service professional learning.

1.2 Section 1: Foundations

The current section begins with the poem “*It bends, but does not break*” which reflects on the journey of a sapling becoming a tree, and its resilience through the Australian seasons that shape the tree and contribute to its uniqueness. So too, the current section presents the foundations of our journey in teacher resilience research – our roots that “*stretch out and connect*”.

In Chap. 2, Susan Beltman discusses the various ways resilience has been conceptualised in the literature, emphasising the advantages afforded by multiple perspectives. Starting with our early work (Beltman et al. 2011; Mansfield et al. 2012b) which began with exploration of personal risks and resources (Mansfield et al. 2012a),

moving to investigating the teacher resilience process (Mansfield et al. 2014) and then context and system perspectives (Mansfield et al. 2016b, c, 2018), this chapter illustrates how the multiple perspectives enable unique insights and move the field forward.

Chapter 3 presents the journey of the BRiTE projects, starting in 2013. This chapter provides context for our work and explains the development of the BRiTE modules with regard to content and also the design principles that informed the online learning pathway. Each of the various features of the modules (personalization, interactivity, connections to the profession and the literature) are illustrated and examples provided. Evidence of impact through evaluation and website data is reported. This chapter also overviews the Staying BRiTE project which extended the work through collaboration with project partners and development of national and international networks.

1.3 Section 2: Implementation and Applications

This section is introduced by the poem “*Tether lines*” which reflects on the journey where there are uncertainties and uncharted waters ahead. The tether lines provide connection to others, but yet do not bind or constrain. In the same way, the chapters in this section are connected to the foundations by “tether lines” which have guided and supported subsequent work.

This section, Implementation and Applications, includes chapters illustrating the range of ways the BRiTE modules have inspired other work in the field. The range of applications show the possibilities of using the modules as a resource upon which to build programmes or learning experience that are attuned with the needs of particular participants. Starting with work from *Staying BRiTE* project partners, this section shows implementation and applications from related studies in Australia, the United States, Portugal and Spain.

Chapters 4 and 5 have been developed from the authentic cases which were outcomes from *Staying BRiTE*. Both these chapters illustrate two different ways resilience may be embedded in teacher education, with differing cohorts of students in differing contexts. In Chap. 4 Noelene Weatherby-Fell and colleagues share their work with pre-service teachers studying to become early years (birth to age 5) teachers. Their approach carefully scaffolds resilience learning using the BRiTE modules across the four years of the Bachelor’s degree and connects this to the broader professional context through national standards, frameworks and accreditation requirements. A unique feature of the approach described is by revisiting the modules in years 3 and 4, and pre-service teachers can see their growth over time and reflect on their development of personal resilience skills and strategies. Pre-service teacher blog posts are used to better understand the impact of the implementation.

Chapter 5 illustrates an approach to building resilience for postgraduate students completing a secondary initial teacher education degree (Master of Teaching). Sharon McDonough and Amanda McGraw integrated the BRiTE topic themes alongside

their existing work on thinking dispositions for teaching (McGraw and McDonough 2019) and contextualised this within a site-based programme. Findings highlight the importance of a people-centred disposition as a personal resource for resilience and that the dispositions and resilience are interconnected in various ways.

Moving internationally, Chap. 6 explores the potential for the BRiTE modules to contribute to beginning teachers' resilience in the United States of America. In this study, Lynn Sikma developed a series of professional learning workshops, underpinned by the BRiTE modules, for beginning teachers. An overview of the workshops and evaluation from participants is presented. The findings in this chapter suggest that the topics of the modules were useful and appropriate for the audience; the explicit reference to pre-service teachers in the modules was off-putting for teachers. This emphasises the importance of context, targeting resilience professional learning closely to participants' needs and situation.

Chapter 7 also focuses on professional learning for teachers. Luisa Fernandes and colleagues in Portugal report on their "Positive Education" programme, adapted from the ENhancing Teachers RESilience in Europe (ENTREE) project (Wosnitza et al. 2013). This project ran alongside the BRiTE project, with Susan Beltman and myself involved as third country partners. Hence there are some synergies between the two projects. This chapter presents an overview of the professional learning programme and qualitative evaluation of the programme impact for participants. Implications for teacher educators and policy makers are discussed.

Chapter 8 presents a study from Spain, where the ENTREE project and BRiTE modules inspired a Professional Assessment and Development (PAD) Induction Program for beginning teachers and their mentors. The inclusion of mentors into the project design is unique, yet potentially critical, given the emphasis on the importance of mentors for early career teacher resilience. Gloria Gratacós and colleagues report that participation in the programme had a positive effect on confidence and stress control for beginning teachers and that survey results showed resilience as being important for commitment.

Chapter 9 explores the potential of the BRiTE modules in a project by Marjon Fokkens-Bruinsma and colleagues in the Netherlands. The chapter explains the contexts that have informed the project, the rationale for the approach and the plan for implementation. As noted in Chap. 6, country and participant context are important considerations and with that in mind, there is planned translation and adaptation of the BRiTE modules so they are better suited to the Dutch context. This project provides some insights for future projects drawing on the BRiTE modules.

A further extension of the BRiTE modules has been the development of a sixth module, *BRiTE Mind*. This module explores mindfulness as a resilience resource for teachers. In Chap. 10, Helen Correia provides a rationale for the module, drawing on recent research regarding mindfulness and teachers and discussing the relationship between resilience and mindfulness. Referring to the BRiTE modules, the chapter explains specific mindfulness practices that support the themes of the five BRiTE modules. The approach taken in development of *BRiTE Mind* is explained along with examples consideration for how the module should be used.

Chapter 11 concludes this section by discussing practical implications for building teacher wellbeing in education. Resilience and wellbeing are related constructs, and Daniela Falecki and Elizabeth Mann use a positive psychology lens to investigate a range of strategies for supporting teacher wellbeing. Arguing that hope, efficacy, resilience and optimism (HERO) are important psychological resources to support wellbeing, the authors describe some of the practical ways wellbeing can be supported and some of the challenges of supporting professional learning focused on wellbeing in school.

1.4 Section 3: Future Directions

“Time and transformation” introduces this section by describing the gentle way the art of Sashiko enables the old and the new to join together in the process of transformation. This final section also brings together the old and the new and in doing so poses important questions and possibilities for moving forward. Future directions include other theoretical frameworks for understanding teacher resilience and drawing attention to possibilities of augmented reality, cross-cultural applications and teacher educator resilience.

In Chap. 12, Johanne Klap and colleagues present findings from a mixed method longitudinal mindfulness study conducted with 30 school principals in Western Australia. Since school leaders have a strong influence on school culture and the wellbeing of their staff, Principals themselves need to take care of their wellbeing. Experiencing a 10-week mindfulness program these Principals showed increased self-compassion and self-care and greater resilience. The chapter includes reflections from Principals to illustrate the impact on the program and how it had influenced their leadership. Future research should more closely examine the role of school leaders own self-care and the resilience of their staff.

There has been very less research concerning the resilience of early career casual teachers, and in Western Australia, many graduates start their career in casual positions. In Chap. 13 Helen Dempsey and colleagues report a longitudinal study using multiple methods of data collection and exploring early career casual teachers’ development of teacher identity. This study supports the view that teacher identity and teacher resilience are related constructs (Pearce and Morrison 2011; Flores 2018) especially with the finding that relationships are critical for early career casual teachers. Future research should consider resilience development of casual teachers, especially in the early career years.

Although socio-ecological approaches to understanding resilience have become prevalent, as noted by Susan Beltman (Chap. 2) multiple perspectives are useful for gaining new insights and asking different questions. In Chap. 14, Helena Granziera and colleagues make a case for using Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) theory (Bakker and Demerouti 2017) to understand teacher resilience and to provide insights into how teachers overcome adversity at work. Through explanation of JD-R and how

it has been used to understand how individuals manage workplace demands and resources, they argue that this theory provides useful directions for future research.

Chapter 15 returns to the BRiTE modules, but this time with an innovative future possibility. Susan Ledger explains how she has developed a programme using the BRiTE modules in conjunction with Simlab™ (human in the loop synchronous simulation). Pre-service teachers draw on the content from the BRiTE modules and practice their skills in a micro-teaching context with a group of five avatars. This chapter explains how this approach is developed over a four-year programme and using pre-service teacher evaluation to describe the impact.

In Chap. 16 Helen Boon critiques existing teacher resilience research and poses some questions and challenges for future research. Arguing that due to a heavy reliance on self-report measures, the literature to date has reported on teachers' perceived psychological resilience. A conceptual framework of teachers' "lived in" resilience is proposed and arguments made for more objective indicators of teacher resilience to be considered in future research.

Although the focus of much research on teacher resilience has been on teachers at a range of career stages, a neglected group for whom resilience is also important is teacher educators. In Chap. 17, Sharon McDonough and colleagues describe a study conducted with teacher educators in Australia to understand what sustains and challenges teacher educators in their work. Using a social ecological model they explore resilience supports and constraints on multiple levels and make recommendations for higher education contexts.

The final chapter in this volume is written by Judith MacCallum. Judith was the Evaluator for both the BRiTE and Staying BRiTE projects and has watched this programme of work develop since its inception. The chapter draws together key themes and makes recommendations for future directions.

1.5 Concluding Thoughts

The programme of research at the heart of this book continues to grow both nationally and internationally. It is heartening to see at the same time, a rise in concern about teacher wellbeing and resilience from employers, policy makers and accrediting bodies, and we are optimistic about this translating into specific workplace practices. Throughout our journey of researching and supporting resilience of teachers, we have made a positive contribution to each others' resilience, contributing to our shared resilience as a network of teachers and researchers.

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