

# Chapter 2

## Understanding and Examining Teacher Resilience from Multiple Perspectives



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**Abstract** In this chapter, I argue that differing conceptualisations of the construct of resilience shape and enrich the research questions and methodology used to examine it. In addition, the conceptual focus has implications for questions such as whose responsibility it is for the development of resilience. Research conducted within two Australian projects, *Keeping Cool* and *BRiTE* (Building Resilience in Teacher Education) is used as an illustration of the impact of a changing conceptual focus. For example, beginning with a psychological perspective led to an examination of risk and protective factors for individuals. More contextual approaches involved a comparison of countries. Recent systemic views support a model that encompasses both personal and contextual characteristics, as well as strategies used and outcomes achieved. It is argued that taking multiple perspectives in this programme of work has enabled the incorporation of a broad range of research methods and findings, and contributed to a deeper understanding of the construct of teacher resilience.

**Keywords** Teacher resilience · Resilience theories · Resilience concepts · Review

### 2.1 Background

In this chapter, I will outline four perspectives on teacher resilience that have guided a programme of research that has contributed to theory and practice. When we think of resilience and teachers, we generally think about “what sustains teachers and enables them to thrive rather than just survive in the profession” (Beltman et al. 2011). I have been fortunate to have worked with colleagues over the past ten years on a number of research projects related to teacher resilience, including *Keeping Cool* (Mansfield et al. 2012a), *ENTREE* (Wosnitza et al. 2013) and *BRiTE* (Mansfield et al. 2015)

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The original version of this chapter was revised: Error in link has been corrected as “<http://www.entree-online.eu/>”. The correction to this chapter is available at [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5963-1\\_19](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-15-5963-1_19)

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(see Chap. 3). In our work, we have adopted different lenses to ask different kinds of research questions and used the findings from others' research using different perspectives to guide our thinking and interventions.

Different perspectives, foci, lenses or worldviews, guide our sometimes taken-for-granted perspectives on the world and various phenomena. The underlying assumptions of our perspectives guide our research questions, activities and interpretations and so need unpacking and clarifying (Crotty 1998, p. 17). As Pring (2000) points out, researchers must be eclectic, with different kinds of questions requiring different research methods. Being aware of the underlying assumptions of our preferred worldview in relation to teacher resilience, for example, raises issues such as where the responsibility for supporting teacher resilience lies, and directs the nature of interventions that are put in place (Beltman and Mansfield 2017).

One example of differing worldviews is the debate in psychological research around the relationship between the individual person and the environment in which the individual develops and acts. Focus on the individual or person and their understandings and other characteristics is seen as the "traditional view", with the person considered as separate from the environment in which they exist. Other, more social views are seen to be in opposition to this and suggest that the person and their environment cannot be considered separately (Valsiner and Van Der Veer 2000). From the perspective of these authors, the crucial challenge is: "How to construe persons as being social without abandoning their obvious personal autonomy, separateness from any social unit (group, crowd, community), while being members of such units" (p. 6). A more sociocultural viewpoint suggests that individuals exist within multiple, dynamic levels of context and so necessitates paying attention to three "interweaving levels of analysis"—the individual, the interpersonal and the cultural (Tudge and Putnam, 1997, p. 254). Such differing worldviews have influenced the way resilience is conceptualised and examined.

In this chapter, I will briefly outline four different perspectives that focus on person, process, context or system, and consider how these informed our programme of research. I raise some issues that depend on the worldview adopted, and argue that taking multiple perspectives contributes to a deeper understanding of the construct of teacher resilience. Rather than working with one view or approach to the construct, we have drawn from, and built upon our own and others' work, to move the field forward.

## 2.2 Person-Focused Perspectives

The first conceptualisation that I will address is person-focused. Resilience research originally aimed to understand how children overcame the impact of traumatic or high-risk backgrounds to achieve positive psychological outcomes (Masten et al. 1990). Although recognising the importance of family and community as contributing both risk and protective factors, research focused on "the life stories of individuals and on the individual variation within particular high-risk groups" (Benard 1999,

p. 270). When thinking of teacher resilience, researchers with a person-focused perspective have concerns such as the negative impact on educators of stress and emotional labour (Ghanizadeh and Royaei 2015; Woolfolk Hoy 2013). When individual teachers experience stress and burnout, it can lead to a loss of satisfaction with their chosen career or a reduced sense of wellbeing (Skaalvik and Skaalvik 2016). Pretsch and colleagues suggest that resilience is “a trait that actively fosters well-being” (Pretsch et al. 2012, p. 322) or a “personal resource” (p. 323). Other definitions that focus on personal capacity suggest that resilience is “the capacity to continue to ‘bounce back’, to recover strengths or spirit quickly and efficiently in the face of adversity” and it is linked closely to “a strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy and motivation to teach” (Sammons et al. 2007, p. 694). One example of interventions based on a person-focused view are those that aim to build the psychological capacity of individuals in areas such as emotional awareness and regulation (Schussler et al. 2018).

At the commencement of our research into teacher resilience, our aim was to discover how to build the capacity of preservice teachers to enable them to be resilient as they moved into teaching. We used the framework of risk and protective factors to analyse the literature in the field (Beltman et al. 2011). Both personal and contextual risk and protective factors were identified and illustrated in Table 2.1, where the most frequent factors are provided. At the time, research on teacher resilience was in its infancy and the 50 selected papers were related to teacher resilience as they examined factors that enabled teachers to remain in the profession, even though they may not have explicitly used the term resilience. The paper also noted that there was an overall consensus that multiple factors operated in dynamic ways. Despite seeing the importance of contextual risk and protective factors, our research at that time took

**Table 2.1** Risk and protective factors for teacher resilience (Beltman et al. 2011)

	Individual	Contextual
Risk factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Negative self-beliefs and confidence</li> <li>• Reluctance to seek help</li> <li>• Conflict between personal beliefs and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behaviour management</li> <li>• Meeting needs of disadvantaged students</li> <li>• Heavy workloads and time required for non-teaching duties</li> <li>• Lack of resources</li> <li>• Relations with students’ parents</li> <li>• Difficult schools or classes</li> </ul>
Protective factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Altruistic motives</li> <li>• Sense of competence and pride</li> <li>• Strong intrinsic motivation</li> <li>• Tenacity and perseverance</li> <li>• Internal locus of control</li> <li>• Proactive, problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Self-insight and reflection</li> <li>• Professional aspirations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School administrative support</li> <li>• Mentor relationships</li> <li>• Support from peers and colleagues</li> <li>• Working with the students</li> </ul>

a person-focused approach as our concern was with individual teacher capacities and skills.

As part of the Keeping Cool project, we surveyed 98 final-year preservice teachers and 161 new graduates (Mansfield et al. 2012b). Although we understood the complexity of resilience, we outlined our person-focused thinking as follows (p. 359):

Given that teaching does present challenges, what does a resilient teacher look like from the perspective of those at different points in the early stages of their career? What skills, attributes or characteristics would a resilient teacher possess or be able to demonstrate? Our research aimed to address these questions.

Data analysis revealed 23 categories of what we called “aspects” that were grouped into four dimensions of resilience: profession-related, emotional, motivational and social. Table 2.2 provides examples of aspects of resilience within each dimension. The first three dimensions included personal skills and capacities such as a sense of humour, liking challenge and effective teaching skills. The social dimension also included personal capacities such as communication skills, but additionally incorporated context in that aspects such as building relationships and seeking help were identified. The question that participants responded to was: “How would you describe a resilient teacher?” The questions guiding our study and the wording of this question and, perhaps inevitably, the subsequent responses of participants reflected our person-focus. Realising this, we wrote:

... although it was apparent from the responses that early career and graduating teachers interpreted our question to focus on personal aspects of teacher resilience, given that our understanding of resilience is that it includes the relationships between individuals and their contexts, the data were also examined for references to contexts (Mansfield et al. 2012b, p. 360).

When we explicitly examined responses for references to context, we found that “66% of respondents included some reference to context, such as an event, an interaction, a place, school or organisation, when describing a resilient teacher” (Mansfield et al. 2012b, p. 364). We interpreted this as meaning that although we may have aligned our question to participants with a person-focused approach, nevertheless what was made clear in our data was the “key role of context in providing supports or challenges for the development of resilience” (p. 364). Recognising the

**Table 2.2** Dimensions and aspects of teacher resilience

Dimension	Aspects of resilience examples
<i>Emotional</i>	not taking things personally, sense of humour, ability to bounce back, emotion regulation
<i>Motivational</i>	self-belief and confidence, persistence and perseverance, having realistic expectations, being positive and optimistic
<i>Profession-related</i>	teaching competence and skills, classroom management, facilitating effective learning, being flexible and adaptable
<i>Socia</i>	asking others for assistance, interpersonal skills, ability to take advice from others, professional and personal support networks

crucial role of context, our next focus was not on contexts themselves, but on the person–context interface. We were concerned that a trait or person focus, while illuminating important skills and capacities could indicate that the responsibility for developing teachers who are resilient lies with the individual teacher. Masten and Powell (2003, p. 4) cautioned against talking about “a resilient person” and argued “resilience is not a trait of an individual, though individuals manifest resilience in their behaviour and life patterns”. Similarly, Gu and Li (2013) maintained that “the nature and sustainability of resilience in teachers is not innate, but influenced by individual qualities in interaction with contextual influences in which teachers’ work and lives are embedded” (p. 300). The nature of this interaction became our next area of investigation.

### 2.3 Process-Focused Perspectives

If resilience does not lie within an individual, where does it lie? If personal and contextual factors are both important, what are the processes by which they work to sustain teachers? We answered such questions by adopting a person–context perspective in which individuals are regarded as complex and are understood to live and act within multiple, complex, dynamic contexts (Volet 1999). In this view, resilience lies at the interface of person and context, where individuals use strategies to enable them to overcome challenges and sustain their commitment and sense of wellbeing. Castro et al. (2010, p. 623) viewed resilience as a process where teachers used “a variety of resilience strategies”, and rather than focus on teacher attributes or environmental resources, they argued that these strategies need to be the focus of study. Therefore, in our next paper (Mansfield et al. 2014) our focus was on the resilience process. We analysed interviews with 13 Australian early career teachers and asked the research question: “How is early career resilience shaped by personal and contextual challenges and resources?” (Mansfield et al. 2014, p. 551).

As resilience is evident in the face of challenge or adversity (Doney 2013), we first analysed the interviews to look for challenges experienced by the beginning teachers (see Table 2.3). The 101 different challenges identified were ongoing, “everyday” ones (Gu and Day 2013) rather than reflecting incidents of severe adversity found in the resilience studies working with at-risk young people (Masten and Powell 2003). In the paper related to this data (Mansfield et al. 2014), we focused on the individual participants and their overall experiences so we could examine the processes for each person, but we also grouped the challenges as in Table 2.3 for conference presentations (e.g. Mansfield and Beltman 2012).

After identifying the large range of challenges that reflected person and context, the next key step was to determine what resilience processes or strategies the early career teachers used when faced with these challenges. Building on our previous work, we used the four dimensions of teacher resilience (Mansfield et al. 2012b) as an analytic frame. Table 2.4 provides examples of the strategies reported for each

**Table 2.3** Challenges of early career teachers

Personal	Interpersonal	Infrastructure
<i>Work–life balance</i> e.g. no time for hobbies	<i>Family and friends</i> e.g. less contact	<i>Policies and practices</i> e.g. poor housing
<i>Personal attributes</i> e.g. perfectionist	<i>Teachers and admin</i> e.g. lack of recognition or support	<i>School organisation</i> e.g. moving rooms; lots of meetings
<i>Knowledge</i> e.g. lack of reporting	<i>Students</i> e.g. challenging behaviour; multiple needs	<i>Classroom resources</i> e.g. lack of teaching materials and resources
<i>Feel overwhelmed</i> e.g. “trying to juggle fifteen thousand balls”; “it’s like a roller coaster”	<i>Parents</i> e.g. parent complaints	<i>Preservice preparation</i> e.g. teaching in different area; lack of admin experience; 1-year course

**Table 2.4** Early career teacher responses to challenges by dimension of resilience

Emotional	Motivational	Profession-related	Social
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep calm</li> <li>• Focus on what you love about the job</li> <li>• Enjoy the kids</li> <li>• Manage emotions</li> <li>• Positive self-talk</li> <li>• Have fun</li> <li>• Use coping skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Believe in yourself</li> <li>• Have realistic expectations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on the students</li> <li>• Use problem-solving skills</li> <li>• Reflect</li> <li>• Get organised</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debrief with partner</li> <li>• Ask for help rather than pretend it’s okay</li> <li>• Talk to your mentor</li> <li>• Talk to other staff</li> <li>• Seek counselling</li> </ul>

dimension. Participants also used physical strategies such as going for a run that had not appeared in our previous study.

An emphasis on the resilience process highlights the agency of teachers. Rather than being passively affected by challenges, they actively use a variety of strategies to overcome challenges, with the potential to also “change the ability of an at-risk environment to enable resilience” (Ebersöhn 2012, p. 30). Teachers are the key drivers of developing positive classrooms that facilitate children’s learning (Jennings and Greenberg 2009), and interventions based on this view tend to focus on personal and social skills needed by individual teachers in classrooms and educational settings. This was indeed the focus of our BRiTE modules that were in development at this time (Mansfield et al. 2015). While it is positive to acknowledge teacher agency, focusing on capacities of teachers or strategies they use again raises the possibility of a deficit view of teacher resilience (Day 2014). Are teachers to blame if they are not “resilient” as they lack the required skills or strategies? We then turned our focus to examine context more explicitly.

## 2.4 Context-Focused Perspectives

While recognising the importance of personal capacities and agency, as well as the strategies used by individual teachers, we were also aware of the importance of context. Numerous challenges (the term we began using to replace “risk factors”) faced by individual teachers were identified, by our research as well as in the literature, as arising from the context. Unreasonable parental expectations or unsupportive school administration are some examples (Beltman et al. 2011). In addition, contexts vary in terms of specific situations and over time with Bobek (2002, p. 202), suggesting that resilience involves “the ability to adjust to varied situations and increase one’s competence in the face of adverse conditions”. Resilience can develop over time and “manifests itself as a result of a dynamic process within a given context” (Gu and Day 2007, p. 1305). Concerns about broader policies and a competitive work climate that increase the administrative load for teachers, sometimes known as the performativity agenda, can influence commitment and wellbeing (Day et al. 2005). From an employers’ perspective, subsequent teacher attrition is wasteful financially, as well as leading to a loss of social capital and further disadvantaging some school communities (Gallant and Riley 2014; House of Commons Education Committee 2012). A focus on context also shifts the notion of where the responsibility for resilience lies, as it “directs our attention away from the ‘here-and-now’ specifics of individual teachers’ lives and contextualizes their experiences within broader social, cultural, and political arenas” (Johnson et al. 2014, p. 533). Interventions based on this view might focus on context-specific resources. For example, Thrive at Work is a recent Australian initiative where work design is the starting point and the vision explicitly states that “well-being interventions must be focussed on the design of work and not solely on individualistic strategies” (<https://www.thriveatwork.org.au/vision/>).

What was also evident from our and others’ research was that context could provide important sources of support for resilience—a term increasingly replacing “protective factors”. Resilience involves personal agency and the ability to use not only one’s own personal resources but also those in various contexts (Ebersöhn 2012; Gu and Li 2013). Michael Ungar and his colleagues explain that resilience involves “both the capacity of individuals to navigate their way to the psychological, social, cultural, and physical resources that sustain their well-being, and their capacity individually and collectively to negotiate for these resources to be provided in culturally meaningful ways” (Ungar 2012, p. 17). A social ecological lens is used to consider the individual person and multiple layers or levels of context. Such a perspective enables consideration of, for example, complex workplaces of early childhood educators (Beltman et al. 2019), or how resilience is manifested in resource-poor contexts (Theron 2018). With Australian colleagues, we proposed that being aware “of both the individual and their environment allows for a transactional approach” and the adoption of a “place-based perspective of resilience”—in this case situated in the “social ecology of central Australia” (Papatraianou et al. 2018, p. 894).

From this wider perspective, we undertook a cross-national study with colleagues from South Africa (Mansfield et al. 2018). Liesel Ebersöhn, working in a global south country, explores resilience in contexts where teachers and education communities are faced with what could be described as extensive, continuing and serious challenges or “a procession of risks” (Ebersöhn 2014, p. 569). Our research had been conducted in Australia, a relatively affluent country. Michael Ungar (2012), also working in areas of high adversity, suggests that it is important to identify shared aspects of resilience as well as those that are unique to a particular social or cultural context. We began by comparing the two national contexts which are both postcolonial countries located in the southern hemisphere. Although students in rural areas could experience disadvantage in both countries, the proportion of children living in rural South Africa was much greater. In Australia, the main challenge was attracting and retaining teachers to more remote locations. Education in South Africa, however, was impacted by inefficient government bureaucracy, corruption, inadequate infrastructure (e.g. lack of buildings or water), poverty, unemployment, crime and poor public health (Mansfield et al. 2018).

Our aim was to investigate the challenges and resources in each context, as well as to understand “how teacher resilience is experienced in each context” (Mansfield et al. 2018, p. 55). At this point little research existed that explicitly compared resilience of teachers in different countries. Our chapter was published alongside one from the ENTREE project relating to four European countries (Peixoto et al. 2018). The key findings regarding challenges and resources in Australia and South Africa are illustrated in Table 2.5 according to the level of context derived from ecological models (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). It may be seen in the table that the word “system” is used for each level and, in line with our collaborators’ preference, the word “risk” is used in place of “challenge”. This avoids confusion as “context” in the study refers to

**Table 2.5** Challenges and resources in Australia and South Africa (Mansfield et al. 2018)

System level	Key findings
Personal system	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both AUS and SA: very similar risks and resources e.g. common risk: feeling overwhelmed</li> <li>• Similar resources and adaptive coping strategies used e.g. persistence, optimism, help-seeking and reflection</li> </ul>
Micro/mesosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Similar origin of risks (students, parents, colleagues) but quality/quantity differed e.g. AUS managing student diversity; SA students had significant health/welfare needs</li> <li>• Teachers in both contexts draw on similar resources e.g. collaboration with colleagues and local community</li> </ul>
Exo/macrosystem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No common resources</li> <li>• AUS: range of resources available</li> <li>• SA: widespread chronic poverty, unemployment, prolonged health risks</li> <li>• SA: resilience required drawing on available and unique cultural and social resources, e.g. applying for social development grants</li> </ul>



Australia or South Africa, and also foreshadows the following section that outlines a system-focused perspective.

## 2.5 System-Focused Perspectives

The second part of our research comparing data from Australia and South Africa aimed to examine how resilience was experienced in each context or country, and from a social ecological perspective, each system. This question entailed a consideration of personal perspectives as well as multiple contexts and the relations between them. We found that, as illustrated in Table 2.5, personal challenges and resources were similar, irrespective of country (Mansfield et al. 2018). While collaboration and networking with family and colleagues were common across both countries, the “South African data suggests relationships had a collective power to meaningfully support community cohesion which in turn buffered against systemic risk to support resilience processes of teachers and students” (p. 66). This is similar to other findings that in South Africa, individuals are connected to each other in relationships, as well as to resources in their environments, and resilience occurs through the mobilisation of systemic relationships (Ebersöhn 2012). Individual agency was noted previously where individuals use specific strategies to overcome challenges, but using a different cultural lens, collective efficacy emerges as an important part of resilience. A further difference between the two nations was that at the most distal, macrosystem level, there were no common challenges and again unique, culturally relevant resources were needed to address the challenges unique to each context (Mansfield et al. 2018).

Ungar (2012, p. 15) highlighted the importance of the “social and physical environment as the locus of resource for personal growth”, also stating that “individual and ecological positions are neither mutually exclusive nor antagonistic. They simply emphasize different aspects of the processes associated with resilience ...” Similarly, Masten (2014) concluded that the “processes that lead to resilience clearly involve many systems within the individual as well as many systems outside the individual” (p. 170). These systems are continually interacting with each other. So resilience involves individual characteristics, strategies or processes as well as multiple systems and contexts. In our research on teacher resilience, our definition developed to include these aspects as well as the outcomes—what we would see if a teacher was “resilient” and we proposed that “teacher resilience is

- the capacity of an individual to navigate through challenges and harness personal and contextual resources, as well as
- the process whereby characteristics of individual teachers and of their personal and professional contexts interact over time, to enable
- the outcome of a teacher who experiences professional commitment, growth and wellbeing” (Beltman 2015, p. 21).

An issue arising with the focus on capacity, process and context is the number of potential skills, strategies and settings that can be involved in teacher resilience.

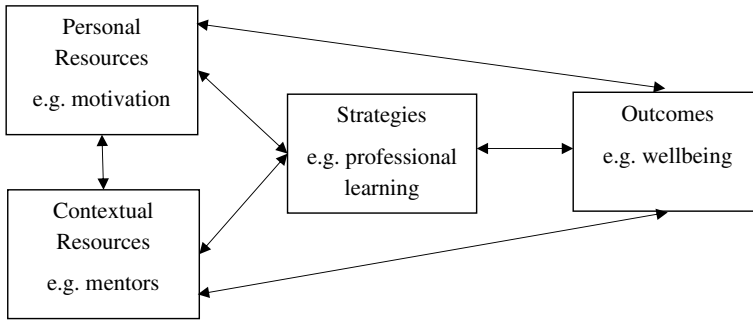
Yonezawa et al. (2011) write about “the conflation of resilient characteristics of teachers and the environmental supports” (p. 915). In the 13 interviews with beginning teachers, we found 101 separate challenges (Mansfield et al. 2014). Doney (2013) examined data from only four teachers and found “no two participants had the same combination of protective factors, nor the same degree with which they applied those protections to the stress” (p. 657). In order to make progress on this issue and understand some of the multiple constructs that relate to teacher resilience, we turned again to the literature, examining 71 peer reviewed journal articles and book chapters about teacher resilience published from 2000 to 2015 (Mansfield et al. 2016a).

We adapted a previously developed systems model related to the process of learning (Biggs and Moore 1993) to organise the 51 factors that emerged from this literature and categorised the constructs as relating to personal resources, contextual resources, strategies and outcomes (Mansfield et al. 2016b). Table 2.6 provides the five most frequent constructs or factors that were evident in the 71 papers. Rather than asking about the relationship of each factor to any or all other factors, adopting a systemic approach enables an understanding of the whole process of resilience, which can then vary for different individuals, different settings, and over time. Figure 2.1 illustrates this systemic view, based on Biggs and Moore’s (1993) model and expanded in more detail in our book chapter (Mansfield et al. 2016b). The bi-directional arrows between all components of the system indicate the dynamic, interactive nature of all the parts.

When viewed from a systemic perspective, where does the responsibility for resilience lie? What difference does this broader view make? Ann Masten has contributed prolifically to the field of resilience and her work shows the development of theory and research in this area. In her 2014 book she defines resilience as: “The capacity of a dynamic system to adapt successfully to disturbances that threaten system function, viability, or development” (Masten 2014, p. 10). A system could be an individual, but also “a family, a school, a community, an organization, and

**Table 2.6** Most frequent resilience constructs (#papers) (Mansfield et al. 2016a)

Personal resources	Contextual resources
Motivation (35)	School leaders (41)
Efficacy (29)	Colleagues (31)
Sense of purpose (21)	Relationships with students (26)
Optimism (19)	Mentors (25)
Social-emotional competence (11)	School culture (25)
Strategies	Outcomes
Work-life balance (28)	Wellbeing (42)
Problem-solving (23)	Commitment (35)
Professional learning (13)	Job satisfaction (27)
Goal setting (13)	Agency (23)
Setting boundaries (13)	Enthusiasm (16)
Reflection (13)	



**Fig. 2.1** A systemic view of resilience (Adapted by permission from Mansfield, C. F., Beltman, S., Weatherby-Fell, N., & Broadley, T. (2016b). *Classroom ready?: Building resilience in teacher education* (pp. 211–229). In R. Brandenburg, S. McDonough, J. Burke, & S. White (eds.). *Teacher education: Innovation, interventions and impact*. Singapore: Springer.)

economy; or an ecosystem” (p. 10). Elsewhere, Qing Gu has eloquently discussed different theoretical views of resilience and advocated a holistic, comprehensive view of teacher resilience (Day and Gu 2014; Gu 2014, 2018). Jordan’s (2005) discussion of “relational resilience” has also influenced recent thinking in the field. So how might we think about the responsibility for resilience when considering multiple lenses and constructs and the holistic systemic view?

One way forward for future research is to see resilience as a collective responsibility or as a collective construct. For example, Ebersöhn (2012) argues that “where communities are vulnerable over extended times and commonly lack resources, they experience stress collectively, appraise collectively and respond collectively” (p. 30). Resilience then occurs as a collective response. It is “the result of accessing, mobilising, networking and nurturing sustained resource use” (p. 35). Resilience is “the culmination of collective and collaborative endeavours” (Gu and Li 2013, p. 300). When resilience is viewed as a collective construct the responsibility for enhancing or supporting teacher resilience is also a collective one in the context of a school (Cameron and Lovett 2014), or in wider personal and professional relationships (Le Cornu 2013), or when “scattered individuals link with each other (support seeking, affiliation) and share existing resources” Ebersöhn (2012, p. 30). School leaders play a critical role in creating the organisational conditions that support resilience (Gu 2014), and broader employing body policies can play an important role in, for example, supporting early career teachers (Johnson et al. 2014). Interventions adopting a systemic perspective could focus on any system, on any aspect of a system, or on the interplay between or within different systems.

## 2.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have described four possible lenses that can be used to view the construct of teacher resilience, and thus create a deeper, more holistic notion of the construct. Pring (2000) suggested that researchers must be eclectic regarding research methods, and others support taking a broader view. Writing with regards to conducting multidisciplinary research, but also relevant to research from multiple conceptual perspectives, Lawrence and Dodds (1997) suggested that this can challenge theorists to look “beyond their comfortable conceptualizations” and adopt a “less myopic vision” (p. 294). There are also potential issues with taking such an approach. Even when concepts discussed and examined are very similar and come from a similar theoretical perspective, Matusov (1998) cautioned that they may not be merely slightly different points of view, but rather two very different worldviews. According to Branco (1997), even when researchers share the same basic assumption, such as that there is an interdependent relationship linking the individual and the environment, it cannot be assumed that there are further theoretical similarities. Nevertheless, in our research we have taken the potentially risky step of adopting different perspectives to examine teacher resilience.

In this chapter, I have shown how our work moved from a view of resilience that privileged individual characteristics, to one that encompassed multilayer, dynamic contexts and processes. As our research has developed and publications relating to teacher resilience have grown, there remain issues still to resolve such as how to reconcile these different perspectives, what methodologies best capture the dynamic complexity of resilience when more systemic views are adopted, and how can interventions be personalised or responsive to specific settings? Further work is needed to understand how resilience is different from, or overlaps with, other constructs such as wellbeing or adaptive coping. Is resilience in education settings qualitatively and quantitatively the same as resilience in high risk or adverse situations such as living in war zones or experiencing personal trauma? Does the notion of “adversity” need further interrogation? How do different countries and cultures understand the components of teacher resilience? Are there universal ones or must we take a culturally specific view? Is resilience even a concept used in languages other than English? Such questions provide directions for further research.

I have argued that the conceptual lens used will illuminate key areas needed for building capacities of whole education systems as well as of the individuals within those systems. The lens adopted also shapes the notion of where the responsibility lies for the resilience and wellbeing of those individuals within the system, and for resilience of the system as a whole. While personal capacities are important, focusing only on these may detract from considering the responsibilities of employers and administrators. Focusing only on wider systems may detract from the importance of individual agency where teachers can take responsibility for their own journeys. A systemic view is one that has the potential to reflect the real-world complexity of education systems and ensure that the capacities, processes and outcomes of each part of the system are harnessed to develop resilience.

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