



L-Università ta' Malta
Centre for Resilience &
Socio-Emotional Health

Resilience in Schools: Research and Practice

Carmel Cefai and Rachel Spiteri (Eds.)



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Published by: Centre for Resilience & Socio-Emotional
Health, University of Malta

ISBN: 978-99957-890-6-0 (paperback)

ISBN: 978-99957-890-7-7 (online)

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Emotional Health, University of Malta, Msida, Malta

Cover design by Iva Zlateva

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PROLOGUE

MICHAEL UNGAR

For more than a decade, our understanding of resilience has been changing. Where we once thought of resilience as the individual child's ability to "bounce back" or demonstrate invulnerability, we now understand resilience to be a facilitated process. Social environments like the family, natural and human-made environments like forests and buildings, and of course institutions such as a child's school, all interact with children in ways that help them achieve positive developmental outcomes. The protective and promotive processes that seed these outcomes are, in turn, responsive to the risk factors children are exposed to, with different promotive and protective processes having a different impact on development depending on the type of internal and external challenges a child experiences. Given the amount of time children spend in school interacting with educators and peers, it is essential that the science of resilience better understands which types of student-school, student-teacher, and student-student interactions are most likely to help children recover from stressful life events, adapt to challenging situations, or transform the environment around them to be more accommodating of their needs.

In this volume, Carmel Cefai and Rachel Spiteri from the University of Malta have brought together world experts in the field of education to explore many different aspects of the educational experience that help children experience resilience. While other volumes focus on the challenges children face in educational settings and problems like cyberbullying and learning challenges, this one addresses an equally important but very different area of concern: How can schools optimize children's psychosocial functioning when children face significant challenges? Since the resilience of any one system can influence the resilience of other co-occurring systems, this volume addresses the many different dimensions of a child's educational experience. For example, chapters dealing with immigrant and refugee children illustrate the profound impact that a supportive educational setting can have during the migration process and the impact of schools on individual mental health and a child's functioning well-beyond the classroom. Indeed, the emerging science of resilience is well-represented here as the contributors pay attention to the many culturally and developmentally nuanced aspects of children's environments which make them more likely to succeed.

As the volume moves from theory to practice, it provides examples of many resilience-promoting programs being used in communities experiencing different levels of

stress. It further expands its focus to look at the impact of the teacher on the student, reflecting the emerging multisystemic perspective of resilience as many different systems interacting to give children the resources they need to survive and thrive.

To study the resilience of students in schools is to remind us to look at the many different systems in a child's life, and how each of these systems must themselves show resilience (e.g., the teacher's resilience enables educators to enhance their student's functioning; inclusive curriculum and safe school policies protect vulnerable and socially marginalized students; etc.). In this way, the study of resilience is the study of children's capacities for optimal development, but that development will always be constrained by factors beyond the child's capacity to change. Educators can help change children's environments, in partnership with their institutions, families and communities, making it possible for students to develop better literacy, cognition and social competence. Teachers can also ensure that children have the capacities they need to make the most of social, financial and even government services and supports that are there to help them live good lives. The more we think about resilience, the more our attention is focused on children's potential to become their best and boldest selves and the many roles schools play in that process.

PART 1
ISSUES AND PERSPECTIVES

**FORCED MIGRANT CHILDREN IN THE
CLASSROOM: PERSPECTIVES FROM EDUCATORS,
FAMILIES, AND PROGRAM MANAGERS**

NICOLE DUBUS

INTRODUCTION

An estimated 30 million children world-wide are forced migrants (UNICEF, 2018). Forced migrant is a term that describes individuals who perceive it unsafe or intolerable to remain in their country of origin. This includes United Nation sanctioned refugees, asylum seekers, and a growing segment of groups who feel forced to flee due to economic and climate issues. This is a broader term that reflects the unprecedented global crisis of forced migration, and the challenges of providing culturally-effective responses to a large, diverse, and ever-changing population (Crank & Jacoby, 2015; Forster, 2011; George, 2010).

Forced migrant children are more likely to have experienced trauma than immigrant children (Ellis, Miller, Baldwin, & Abdi, 2011; George, 2012; Papadopoulos, 2007). The trauma can occur in their homeland which contributed to the need to flee, as well as in the refugee camps. Forced migrant children often have fewer resources and social capital

than do immigrant groups. Many also arrive to the country of resettlement without the necessary language skills (Watkins, Razeq, & Richters, 2012). These challenges can affect an educator's ability to teach that child while also attending to the needs of the entire classroom (Dryden-Peterson, 2015). In addition, the resources, policies, and cultural expectations of the schools influence the educator's ability and strategies to address the needs of forced migrant children and their families (O'Neal et al., 2018). Effective approaches to educating forced migrant children are needed due to the ever-growing and changing demographic of forced migrants worldwide. Educators are not necessarily trained to understand the needs of forced migrant students. This creates educational and behavioral health barriers (Clark, 2017). It is critical that more is understood about the educational needs of forced migrant students and their families, and the educators who work with them.

This study explores the subjective perspectives of various stakeholders involved in the education of forced migrant children once resettled. The stakeholders include forced migrant families, educators, and program managers. The study occurred over three years and four countries, the United States, Iceland, Germany, and Switzerland. The forced migrants were from Somalia, Syria, Bhutan, Iraq, Iran,

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METHODOLOGY

This is a qualitative study that interviewed educators, program managers, refugee parents and children. The purpose of the study was to develop an understanding of the needs of refugee children in educational settings. A qualitative approach was used to best capture the experiences of the participants. The institutional review board reviewed and approved the study. Participants were from four countries: USA, Iceland, Germany, and Switzerland. Participants were recruited through first contacting schools and refugee service agencies. From these contacts, teachers and program managers were contacted. The study was described, and the teachers and program managers were asked to participate. Those participating signed an informed consent which stated the purpose of the study, their rights to not answer any question or end their participation at any time. Their right to confidentiality was explained. They were informed that all information would be confidential and that no identifying data would be made public. From these contacts, refugee families were identified. The families were given information about the study and asked to participate. The families who chose to participate signed an informed consent that declared their rights as a participant, including their rights to confidentiality and to refuse to participate at any time. Only students who were eighteen years old or over were invited to

participate to minimize any negative consequence on children. It was also expected that older students might have more insight into their experiences.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred over three years from 2014-2017 and in four countries: USA, Iceland, Germany, and Switzerland. Participants were interviewed individually. Interviews were performed in a private setting of the participant's choosing, most often in their home or office. A semi-structured interview schedule was used to elicit the perceptions of the participants to the educational and emotional needs of refugee children in school settings. Interviews lasted approximately an hour and were audio-recorded with permission for future transcription. Audio recordings were kept in a password protected file only accessible by the principal investigator (PI). The total number of participants was 55 (N=55), five program managers (one from each country with two from the USA), 30 educators (five each from Iceland, Switzerland, and Germany, and 15 from the USA), eight parents (two parents from each country) and 12 students (three from each country).

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Data Analysis

Content theme analysis was used to discern the principal concepts (Marshall & Rossman, 2014). The participants' own words were used to capture the experiences of the participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Codes were generated from in vivo content. Further reviewing revealed categories of concepts. Categories were combined into larger themes. These themes were then reviewed alongside the categories to ensure that the themes were accurately capturing the categories. The themes were reviewed by two researchers familiar with the research on refugees to see if alternative analysis existed (Marshall & Rossman, 2014).

In the end, the following themes were determined: refugee children experience challenges that far exceed the capacity of classrooms to address; educators felt policies were not aligned with student needs; parents felt schools were holding their children back or not respecting the child's culture; students felt rushed to "fit in" and lost between cultures; program managers felt responsible to aid professionals in integrating the new-arrival families but lacked greater resources to be effective.

FINDINGS

Program managers, educators, parents, and students shared their perspectives on the challenges regarding refugee students being enrolled in public schools in the communities in which the families resettled. Participants described different concerns depending on their role (program manager, student, etc.), their country of residence, and the country of origin of the refugee family. Program managers described concerns related to distribution of the refugee families among the community and the impact of this on any single school that was receiving refugee children. For them, regardless of the country in which they resided, or the nationality of the refugee family, their focus of discussion was on the distribution of resources. The educators' perspectives were localised in the classroom setting itself and reflected their feelings of competence or lack of competence to meet the child's needs. The parents' concerns were wider in scope and related to their desires to keep their culture included in the child's education. Depending on their country of origin, the parents were worried that the quality of education was not rigorous enough. The students reported more social issues than educational ones. Their statements reflected the tension they experienced between their origin-culture and the culture of the new country.

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Refugee children experience challenges that far exceed capacity of classrooms to address.

Overall, the participants described challenges that exceeded the capacity of classrooms to address. The participants reported challenges due to language barriers, illiteracy in the students' primary languages, and educational gaps due to periods of homeland crises and their time in the refugee camps. They also reported the impact of trauma on the students' abilities to learn and socialize in school. In the United States, program managers and educators were accustomed to managing the educational and social needs of children from various cultural backgrounds as well as students with varying levels of learning proficiency. Educators in the United States also stated they were familiar with trauma that is associated with low-income neighbourhoods. However, the program managers and educators from the United States felt ill-equipped to address the severity of these issues with this population. They felt that the students were placed in classrooms without the educators understanding the background of the students and how that background would affect the student's behaviour and aptitudes in class. The educators talked about the layers of issues that stacked upon each other that made working with a child more challenging.

In Iceland, the classrooms were more homogenize and the teachers were less familiar with trauma-informed teaching. The educators described feeling unprepared to manage the students' needs. However, in one school that often received foreign students the educators felt capable of accommodating the refugee students. The structure of their curricula allowed teachers to be flexible with each student. In Germany and Switzerland, there were expectations that students would eventually adapt and that the more they were exposed to the country's language, the faster they would adapt.

Parents expressed valuing education and saw it as a mechanism to help their children adjust, make friends, and prepare for advancing their education or working towards their vocation. The participants reported that these combined issues placed a great expectation on schools and on the classroom setting.

Educators felt policies were not aligned with student needs.

For educators, there was a mixture of heartfelt empathy for the children's situations and a weary frustration at their ability and resources to manage the children's learning within the classroom. Many of these frustrations were described as policy-related issues. For example, many countries place children into a specific academic grade based upon the child's age or on their

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academic level. Each of these approaches were seen to have challenges. Children, placed out of their age group but in classes more suited to their academic level, can feel added stress when they feel isolated due to age differences with their classmates. Children placed in classes based upon their age can feel stress if they struggle academically to perform on the same level as their peers.

Some children had been performing well in school in their homeland prior to the internal conflicts in their country. However, during the conflicts and while in the refugee camps, few children received education. Some children who were from poor countries and rural settings never attended school regularly and were already far behind the education standards for their ages.

Educators also remarked on the role of parents in educating the children. Many of the educators discussed the desire to include the parents more and were unsure as to how to do this. The familiar ways of including parents in the students' education (teacher-parent meetings, school events, in-school volunteering) didn't seem to transfer to other cultures. Another issue that felt challenging and made connecting with parents more difficult was the educator's ignorance of the family's culture. Teachers felt that they were "driving blind" in not knowing the history, culture or traumatic

events of the migrant students. The reports of the educators described a compound of issues (language issues, preparedness for grade-relevant materials, cultural differences, and trauma related behaviours) that, while each might seem workable, become barriers for the child's learning.

Parents felt schools were holding their children back or not respecting the child's culture.

The cultural differences described by the educators above were echoed in the experiences of the parents. The parents' voices revealed complicated feelings regarding their children's education. The parents were both grateful and conflicted about their children's schools. Every parent expressed gratitude for having safe schools that were attentive to their children. Some of the parents stated that they did not want to meet with the teachers out of respect. As one mother stated, "That is disrespectful to us to tell the teacher what to do. Meeting a teacher is questioning their work." This sentiment was reflected in other responses from parents regarding their involvement in the schools.

Most parents were eager to have their children in school and felt this was an important resource to help their children. As one father from Iran now living in Germany stated, "This is my children's ticket to their future. We want our

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children to succeed.” However, three parents, two from Syria and one from Iran, who had been in professional careers prior to the internal conflicts that led them to resettle, felt the schools were not the resource for which they had hoped. The parents reported feeling that the schools were not as rigorous as schools to which they were accustomed, and worried about what the students would not be learning. This response reflected the tension of wanting their children to fit in to the new culture while also not losing their own.

One difficult aspect many of the families expressed was wanting other children from a similar background to be in the same class. Parents and students felt they would settle faster if they were able to live and attend school with members of their community. Some of the countries in this study tried to place forced migrants in communities with similar cultural backgrounds, while other countries felt it was more effective for integration if the families were not in a cultural community. Parents tried to find a balance between the two cultures and were unsure of how to do this. This tension also reverberated with the children, who felt their own tension between adopting a new culture and maintaining their old one.

Students felt rushed to “fit in” and lost between cultures.

There were 12 students, three from each country. Seven students were 18 years old (three females and four males) and five were aged 19 (two females and three males). The students came from Somalia, Iran, Iraq, Syria, and Bhutan. None of the students were fluent in the language of the country in which they resettled. Language acquisition and cultural conflicts were the prominent themes. For language acquisition, the students felt “rushed to learn” a new language. They suggested not enrolling students into school full-time immediately and focusing the schoolwork on language for a year prior to introducing them into mainstream classrooms. As one student inquired, “Why rush? I know they worry we won’t make friends, but you can’t rush that.”

The other prominent theme related to cultural conflicts. Students reported feeling “caught between two worlds”, the one of their parents and the one of their peers. With their parents they often felt like the bridge between language and cultural differences. The students reported feeling protective of their parents and simultaneously impatient and angry when the students felt trapped by their parents’ ignorance of the new culture. Students often picked up on the new language faster than their parents and quickly became their parents’ cultural and language interpreters. At the same time, the students

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reported feeling isolated when trying to relate to peers. They described feeling on the outside of this new culture and unseen by their peers who had no knowledge of the student's culture or background. These tensions between their home culture and the peer culture influenced how comfortable they felt in the classrooms and in extra-curricular activities. Extra-curricular activities were more difficult for the female students. They reported seeing the male students "jump into" football (soccer in the US) even without language skills to talk to the other boys. The female students felt at a disadvantage socially as there were no comparable activities they could join given their current language skills. Playing soccer for the female students was either not available or not permitted by their families.

Program managers lacked greater resources to be effective.

Program managers worked in the administration offices of the schools. Their jobs focused on supporting the teachers to be able to meet the needs of the students. Program managers were frustrated with the lack of training and resources to prepare teachers to work with refugees. They described examples of teachers misinterpreting parents' behaviours as indifferent or controlling. The teachers hadn't been educated on the cultural background or trauma history of the families with which they worked. They wanted information about the arriving families

and trauma-informed-teaching training. They all shared frustrations with the lack of interpreters and culturally-relevant transcriptions of learning materials. The program managers also wanted to be notified months earlier when a new family was to be resettled in their school district. They felt that more preparation would help the new-arriving family and the schools.

DISCUSSION

This study examined the experiences of forced migrant families and educators from the welcoming countries. Their combined voices describe layers of needs for all the stakeholders: students, parents, educators, and program managers. These layers of needs felt difficult to address. Of all the stakeholders, educators were most expected to manage the needs of the students and families even though few felt they had the training or resources to do so. The students felt torn between worlds as they tried to find their place in the new culture while staying loyal and connected to their culture of origin. The parents seemed the most at-risk of being left on the sidelines of their children's education due to cultural and language differences. These are important findings because schools must respond to families within their districts regardless of the school's ability to serve these families. Forced migrant children are a chronic

and growing social concern. Studies such as this one can help prepare schools.

Limitations of the study

The sample size is not large enough to make wide generalisations from any of the participants, though the findings do suggest the complexity of issues and how this complexity is compounded when examined from different perspectives of those involved. There are many variables including the culture of origin for those fleeing their homelands, the conditions under which they fled, and the culture of the resettling country. These variables are touched upon in this study. Future studies can look deeper into each variable and the ways this impacts refugee children's education, the educator's ability to meet the child's needs, and the role and experiences of the family, among other issues.

Implications

This research suggests that there are some areas where the educating of forced migrant children can be improved. More teachers need to be trained to work with children who have experienced trauma. Students experiencing trauma present classroom behaviours that can be misunderstood by educators. Trauma-informed teaching methods should be taught to

educators. In addition, educators need support and supervision when working with children and families who have experienced severe trauma.

To be culturally effective, educators can benefit from understanding the conditions from which the student fled, and the culture of the family. This knowledge can help teachers reach students and build trust with the parents. Programs of inclusion should be developed to bring the parents into the school. This can happen through cultural-specific events, in-class cultural exposure, and community events which could feel inviting to families.

Educators are challenged to teach students in the classroom who are illiterate in their primary language. These challenges could be mitigated with additional learning services for the student, delayed main streaming of refugee students into classrooms which require fluency in the host country language, or additional training and resources for the educator. Above all, more resources and preparation need to be provided to educators and communities who are welcoming forced migrant families, and to the educators who carry the brunt of meeting the educational needs of these children.

Forced migration shows no signs of lessening. In fact, with political and economic unrest in nations around the world, and with the exponential changes in climate conditions, forced

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migration of families is predicted to increase in scale. Educators will continue to be on the frontlines of welcoming, integrating, and teaching those fleeing to safety. That fact is not in question. What is in question is whether they will be prepared and adequately supported for this complex task. Due to the nature of forced migration, it is also a task with ever-changing demographics, needs and challenges. While one model cannot be used for all school settings, elements of best-practice can emerge with more research.

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**AN EXPRESSION OF RESILIENCE?
THE EXPERIENCES OF STUDENTS FROM AN
ASYLUM-SEEKING BACKGROUND AT A COLLEGE
IN MALTA**

DAMIAN SPITERI

INTRODUCTION

This chapter is constructed on data that has been provided by four young men who left North Africa by boat in order to flee to Europe and ended up in Malta. They are all in the 18 to 22 year age group and all originated from different countries in the Horn of Africa. They are all following courses of study at the Malta College of Arts, Science and Technology (MCAST). MCAST is the country's leading vocational education and training institution, offering 180 full-time and over 300 part-time vocational courses ranging from certificates to Master's degrees. The majority of students who attend MCAST are Maltese but there are also students from another 70 countries. This includes international students and students who are on relatively short-term mobility programmes.

Since it was set up in 2000, MCAST has been offering training to people from asylum-seeking backgrounds, alongside its other students, on humanitarian merits. Malta has been a signatory to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status

of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol since 1971. It is pure coincidence that MCAST was set up at around the same time when the first boats of people started arriving from Africa. Notwithstanding the dangers associated with fleeing from their homelands by boat, people have constantly used this means of travel in order to leave their homelands and build their futures in Europe. The number of people asking for protection in Malta fluctuates. Citing figures compiled by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Grech (2019) points out that the number of migrants arriving in Malta have skyrocketed following unrest in Libya, with the figure of arrivals reaching 1,455 in 2018. This is compared to 23 in 2017, 25 in 2016 and 104 in 2015. Grech explains that not all these people came by boat and not all were Africans. As a case in point, she observes that in 2018, 28% of the arrivals were from Sudan and there were people from other parts of the world who flew into Malta from countries such as Bangladesh and claimed asylum at some point after they arrived in Malta.

While the majority of people seeking asylum in Malta are adults, there can also be young people and children among them. These children or young people are referred to as minor asylum-seekers. They can be either accompanied minors who are with their families or unaccompanied minors who have fled to Malta without any person who would be taking care of them

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coming with them. Almost a quarter of the arrivals in 2018 were children (23%), and of these, 65% were unaccompanied minors. In the Maltese context, the younger age cohorts in school populations are usually accompanied minors, although there are exceptions to this, such as when a child's parents have died in transit on the way to Europe, leaving the child orphaned or when the child has been abandoned since the parents were too ill to carry on their journey *en route* and left their child in the care of trusted friends or relatives.

METHODOLOGY

The four young men on whom this chapter is focused come from different backgrounds. One of the participants came to Malta as a young boy and had gone through the Maltese school system. This implied he could speak Maltese fluently by the time he started studying at MCAST. The others came to Malta at the age of 16 or 17 and joined MCAST directly. This chapter has been written with the aim of exploring whether these young men perceive MCAST to be responsive to their needs and whether they feel that it enables them to reach their life goals.

The study is based on interviews with the participants that were held at MCAST. Each participant was interviewed once (individually), and each interview lasted around 30 to 45 minutes. Short follow-up interviews were sometimes

conducted when additional information was required, however these often took the form of informal conversations between the researcher and the participant at MCAST, usually at the canteen. The aim of the interview was that of examining the participants' satisfaction with studying at MCAST; and asking for suggestions on how training could be offered in a more meaningful manner to them. The sample was a convenience sample and I interviewed people who I had previously interviewed for past studies. Rather than come up with data that could be generalised, I aimed to construct this study on a small sample of young men whom I knew fairly well, thereby generating an emic appreciation of life at MCAST as they perceived, understood and lived it.

Of note is that the relationship between the researcher and the participants is likely to be influenced by the fact that the researcher lectures in Health and Social Care at MCAST, even though he does not lecture to the participants directly. This relationship between the researcher and the participants has itself been the subject of research. This is because the relatively privileged position of the researcher, in the context of the participants, has the potential to create a power imbalance, which would be exacerbated if the researcher was also their assessor. It is possible that, should the researcher occupy a double-role and also be an assessor, students may fear

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that if what they say leaves a negative impact, this could create a bias that could translate into lower marks in their assessments. This situation was avoided since the researcher was not the participants' assessor. To ensure that the participants felt as safe as possible, the researcher referred to the confidential nature of the research activity at salient points when asking the participants for their consent to proceed with the research, and regularly reminded the participants that they were free to withdraw from the research at any time, in which case any data they would have provided would be discarded. Having said this, all participants participated fully in the data gathering process.

While it has been argued that, as a general rule of thumb, well-conducted qualitative research has "...a common epistemological ground: the researcher's determination to minimize the distance and separateness of researcher-participant relationships" (Karnieli-Miller, Strier, and Pessach, 2009, p. 279), this was not necessarily beneficial in this study. There was no way that the researcher could escape the difference between himself and the participants. While they were all males, there were differences in age, as well as racial, linguistic and cultural backgrounds between the researcher and participants. It is also likely that the researcher had a different contextual understanding of MCAST due to being a staff member as opposed to it being the place where participants

hoped to acquire new skills and certification. However, these differences did not appear to generate resistance from the students who gave the impression that they identified with the researcher as a researcher rather than as a lecturer - as could be judged by the free and spontaneous manner in which they answered their questions and their open suggestions of how MCAST could be more responsive to them and to their needs.

If anything, working at MCAST may have served to normalise the researcher's presence and enable the participants to open up more than they might have, had a researcher who did not work at MCAST carried out the same study. An additional advantage was that the researcher did not have to use a translator and thereby risk losing some data in translation. The possibility of having another person on board (the translator) could have proved disruptive due to the particular group dynamic it would have generated, since the participants may have formed a dyadic relationship and bonded with the interpreter since they spoke the same language which may have excluded rather than included the researcher. It is also possible that the participants may have had negative interactions with authorities in the past and employing the use of an interpreter to ask questions may have instigated associations with these experiences (Spiteri, 2015).

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Of further note is the broad locus of this study. It does not simply focus on MCAST. This is in virtue that the researcher was conscious that even though MCAST was a central institution in the participants' lives, other aspects, apart from studies, would also influence their lives. As they explained, they had to retain contact with their families of origin, they had to send them remittances, they had to work at part-time jobs, and they had to get on with their lives besides studying. This sounds a tall order to anyone, but is an even taller order for young men living on little income. Bearing this in mind, extrapolating from the work of Bronfenbrenner (1979) on ecosystems theory, the study looks at the participants' narratives from two dimensions or axis. These are namely the 'microsystems axis' which considers the impact of experiences in different settings on the participants' evolving lives; and the 'macrosystems axis' where attention is given to broad factors that influence these young men's perceptions of their education and training at MCAST. Exploring these multiple dimensions allows for a broader understanding of how what is going on in the wider world - including how global policies are seen as being implemented by students in classrooms and lecture rooms in Malta - and thereby contributes to a more informed analysis of their evolving life-course.

Data Analysis

The analysis of the findings employs a thematic analysis approach. Thematic analysis is a method for locating, analysing, and exploring patterns within data. It enables researchers to generate a theory which emerges from the data and involves considerable researcher activity in identifying patterns/themes and choosing which ones are of interest, besides exploring the bearing they have on the analysis they are making (Rubin and Rubin, 1995). This reduces uncertainty about important phenomena or questions since it ensures that the theoretical framework and methods that are employed are rooted in explorations that are centred on what the researcher wants to know and in the data that the researchers have extrapolated from participants. In this study, the research has been partially influenced by the data collected (and thereby by the relationship forged with participants) and partially by the researcher's own research agenda of exploring how the participants saw MCAST as influencing their lives.

FINDINGS

Six main themes emerged from the participants' interviews when they were asked to offer suggestions, based on their own experiences, about how their training at MCAST could become more meaningful and about their satisfaction with their studies.

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Primarily, they praised MCAST for succeeding in creating diverse routes of entry and progression in the post-secondary education field in Malta. MCAST operates a system of contextualised admissions which enable background factors to be taken into account when deciding on the eligibility of students to follow certain courses. In the case of applicants for courses who do not have the prescribed qualifications, it also directs students to take up courses at a level that they would be most likely to follow with profit, thereby informing them about the entry-level that is applicable to them. One of the participants said;

“When I came to Malta, I had no papers, no certificates, but this does not mean that I knew nothing. I was given a basic assessment by MCAST and I was then assigned to a course at foundation level. Even though I think that academically I could have been assigned to the next level, the foundation course allowed me to find out what studying at MCAST involves, it gave me time to adjust. I had language difficulties, and at foundation level, I was given lessons in English which I found helpful.”

Secondly, they praised the Maltese government for enabling migrants to advance with their education as far as possible. One of the participants observed that “even though the global refugee regime comprises a set of rules, norms and procedures primarily rooted in the 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of the Refugees that govern states’ responses to refugees; different states differ in their opening up access to education, particularly, to adults”. Additionally, all the participants praised the Maltese government for standing up to the growing discourse of ‘migration management’ and the insistence of far-right groups locally to evict migrants from Malta. It has to be acknowledged that the current emphasis on human capital development has made education and training a significant aspect of the globally accepted knowledge-based economy discourse; and it is clear from what they are saying that the migrants want to form part of this discourse via labour market participation.

Thirdly, the participants noted that even though Malta was a small country, that at times it seemed that MCAST was in competition with the University of Malta, and that there was a resource/prestige gap between them. It was by far easier for students from disadvantaged backgrounds to attend MCAST than for them to attend the university, which generally applies more stringent entrance requirements, and in most cases only

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offers degree level courses (level 5 EQF upward), rather than the further education courses (levels 1,2,3 and 4 EQF) that MCAST also offers. While the participants did not suggest downgrading the University of Malta, they believed that MCAST would benefit if had to invest more in the esteem of its education. They believed that the way ahead would be to further evolve the quality control of its courses and its delivery. They did not believe that MCAST had much international prestige, and that although this was changing, locally it was seen in some sectors as offering inferior qualifications to those offered by the University of Malta.

One of the participants said that when MCAST was involved in a dispute with the Malta Union of Teachers, and the Union instructed the lecturers not to give grades to students, “the Union did not help MCAST to be seen a serious institution.” Another participant said that unless MCAST gives itself an international profile by insisting that its lecturers are present in research settings, conferences, and so on, “it would simply seem like a glorified secondary school.” The participant went further to say that “in terms of quality control, it is not enough to speak about verifications, there is a need to see how institutions abroad view MCAST”. Taking into consideration that the world has witnessed a transition from a higher education that was restricted to the elites to one that is available

to the masses since the 1980s (Wu & Hawkins, 2018), taken holistically, quality control is an important aspect of the education process since it adds both credibility and transparency to the diplomas and degrees that are eventually conferred on their graduates.

Fourthly, the participants saw MCAST as a stepping stone not only to work-related opportunities but also for the possibility of furthering their studies. While the participant who came to Malta as a child and was an accompanied minor asylum seeker aspired to further his studies at higher levels at MCAST, the other participants were attending MCAST as the first lap in their journey where they would one day work or further their studies abroad. Within this context, they mentioned the scaffolding of qualifications, particularly since they may have limited time to stay in Malta and may move on at short notice. By giving them qualifications that build on one another year after year not only were they enabled to progress academically but also prove to prospective employers which level they were at, should they not remain in Malta long enough not to complete their course. As one of the participants put it, “unlike the Maltese students, we are very conscious that there can be a clock ticking away.” The participant then went on to say, “I believe that studies will not only open the door for me to have a better future but it will open many doors to me. I am

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so grateful that I am studying at MCAST.” In this respect, the participant was not only showing satisfaction about the opportunity to study at MCAST, but also an inherent overall appreciation of being able to reach his goals through the education and training that MCAST was offering him.

Fifthly, the participants suggested that more areas that could be qualified as Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) programmes could be offered by MCAST. None of the participants discussed the social sciences and none of them thought that the social sciences would offer them a feasible career. This implies that a cross-recommendation would be that prospective candidates at MCAST who come from an asylum-seeking background would be offered information about the social sciences when they are still at the initial stages of applying for MCAST, even though the suggestion for the development of further STEM courses also merits due consideration.

Sixthly, even though the participants did not feel unsupported at MCAST and none of them reported having being bullied either by fellow students or lecturers, they mentioned that they found no help in feeling included and that there were not many co-curricular activities organised at MCAST, except on very rare occasions. An important part of their education was being given skills to enable them to relate

more to other people (Spiteri, 2013), and as the participants explained, in some courses, the acquisition of soft skills was not given due attention. The participant who came to Malta as an accompanied minor asylum seeker commented on the lack of student clubs at MCAST. The other participants spoke about the lack of organised activities which could enable them to integrate with other foreign students. This social barrier was exacerbated by their inability to speak Maltese and, thereby, to join clubs in Malta. Football seemed to be the way out for them, and it so happened that all four participants mentioned this as their favourite pastime. They also mentioned that they played football with other young men, some of whom were their classmates from MCAST, and that this could be a factor that heightened their ability to reach out to their peers.

One of the participants observed that at certain times during their lectures, both lecturers and students would break off into Maltese, particularly if they got excited about a particular topic that they happened to be discussing; and it took some time for them to revert back to English. They sometimes also needed reminding to do so if the lesson was not going to take place entirely in Maltese. MCAST operates a policy of code-switching, calling on lecturers to deliver their lectures in English, but to intercept their lessons with Maltese to clarify certain points, whenever necessary. One has to remember that

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feelings of exclusion can serve as a motive for some students to drop out of courses, and that therefore students need to be resilient enough to counter that by seeking and creating opportunities for them to interact meaningfully with peers which would allow them to have a more enjoyable time when studying at MCAST.

DISCUSSION

Clearly, both micro-level factors and the wider macro-level context are being inferred in the participants' recommendations, namely, both their life as students at MCAST and the impact that other factors in wider society have on them. The decision to study STEM subjects is a case in point. At first glance, it appears to be a micro-level decision, one which they made by themselves and for themselves. Another interpretation of this decision-making is that it is associated with macro-level realities wherein countries are investing heavily in STEM areas in order to enhance their competitiveness. It is also possible that the participants may not have perceived studying social sciences as opening the doors to clear career pathways and leading to good jobs, even though MCAST also offers courses in these areas. However, it is important to consider that there are many forces that come into play in a person's career choices. Some of these are based on a person's explicit choices; others

are influenced by a person's relatively more deeply internalised dispositions and inclinations, as Bourdieu (1977) points out in his writings on habitus. Chao (2018) nevertheless points out that it is vital that institutions offer support to the social sciences since a component of effective societal development depends on graduates in different disciplines who are thereby able to respond adequately to society's needs.

All the six recommendations that the participants mentioned in the findings relate in some way to personal satisfaction. Indeed, the participants expressed gratitude to MCAST for giving them education and training. They saw MCAST as an avenue to a brighter future and widened career possibilities. They also saw MCAST as a safe place since they felt welcomed – even though MCAST lacked certain set-ups (including clubs and the regular organisation of co-curricular activities) that would further consolidate that feeling of being welcomed. However, it remains to be pointed out that student satisfaction is quite complex to gauge. This is because it engages students in subjectively evaluating their wellbeing and this can change fairly easily. For instance, if the students believe that they are subjected to racial discrimination, would this change their overall perspective about MCAST? Although this question can only be partially answered, what we do know from the psychology literature (see, for example studies on

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social learning theory and self-efficacy by Bandura, 1977, 1986) is that resilience is associated with perseverance. Consequently, resilience is linked to the adoption of ‘grit’ or the ‘I can do it’ (mastery) disposition that tends to place people in a better position to counter any negative thoughts that they experience that inhibit them from reaching their goals (Bandura, 1982; Schunk, 1995). The data that the participants provided, in particular, their feelings of gratitude towards MCAST, associates whatever resilience they express, with their ability to focus on the reason why they are attending MCAST; and thereby see its utility partially through the training they are receiving and partially through the certification that it will give them to enable them to pursue their career ambitions, all offer evidence of ‘grit.’

The road is not all rosy, however. The participants also mentioned that the Maltese culture was somewhat alien to them (in the case of the three participants who had only come to the country fairly recently), meaning that difficulties of adjustment may have detracted from their ability to concentrate fully on their studies. A further issue is that they were young men who also were at an age when friends and peer acceptance was important to them, and yet they were relatively disadvantaged since they did not have the same access to the culture that their Maltese peers had. These challenges would be compounded by

the financial problems they might be facing in Malta, particularly if they could not access part-time employment of some form.

It is likely that when the culture of the host society is very different from that of their countries of origin or the long-term transit countries of the participants, adjustment is more difficult (Spiteri, 2013). However, none of the students complained about not being able to follow their studies. It is therefore likely that they had enough basic knowledge of English, and this shows that they must have acquired at least a basic knowledge of English prior to coming to Malta which they then further built on in Malta. Language, however, is not simply the written and spoken word, but it is also a shared understanding and an act of communication that has the potential to convey messages at both the levels of thinking and of feelings. For instance, researchers have found that Asian students find it difficult to follow learning which includes “questioning, criticising, refuting, arguing, debating and persuading” (Major 2005, p. 85); however, none of the participants claimed that they needed to adapt to this, thereby showing that they must have had the language with which to comprehend and participate in this style of teaching.

CONCLUSION

The overall impression that the participants have about MCAST is a positive one. Creating a positive school climate is never easy and demands input not only from management and administration staff, or teachers and students, but also from the minor staff. It transpires that anti-immigrant discourse and unwelcoming attitudes that are sometimes reported on the media do not seem to have found their way into MCAST. The reality that the participants enjoy playing football with other MCAST students also shows a degree of acceptance from all concerned and is likely to further consolidate the sense of community in the group as indicated in the findings of the present study.

It is increasingly recognised that internationalisation is the way forward, and while MCAST opened its doors to fee-paying students from abroad, over the past years, it has worked to acquire an increased international presence for its staff and students. Students from a refugee background also contribute to this international presence and the fact that they see it as a receptive institution that is offering them a chance of a better future speaks volumes about the positive work it is undertaking. As Will (2016) points out “an increased international presence represents a sign for diversity, which is usually considered to

be a highly positive aspect of an institution of higher education” (p.1069).

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GOOD NEWS IN DISASTER JOURNALISM FOR CHILDREN AS A RESILIENCE ENHANCER

PAOLA NICOLINI AND FEDERICA NARDI

INTRODUCTION

The earthquakes hit Central Italy during 2016 and 2017, starting from 24 August 2016. The most violent tremors occurred on 24 August 2016 (6.0 magnitude), 26 October 2016 (5.4 and 5.9 magnitude), 30 October 2016 (6.5 magnitude) and 18 January 2017 (5.1, 5.5, 5.4 and 5.0 magnitude). The situation was dramatic. In the Macerata district, where this research study took place, there were no victims. However, damage occurred to most of the buildings, especially close to the epicenters: 341 schools were damaged and 20,000 people were left without a home within a few seconds.

The editorial project named *Cronache Maceratesi Junior* (Cmj) already existed at the time. This is a local online newspaper created in 2016 that mainly addresses children, families and schools, with a focus on good news. Good news (by which we mean articles with positive, encouraging contents), are often a small part of newspapers nowadays, but not of this one. So while the “normal” section of the newspaper (Cronache Maceratesi) mainly covered the current news for an adult audience, Cmj

focused on children and their social environment to show the good, even in a disaster.

After more than two years since the earthquakes occurred, this chapter shows how “good news” was written in Cmj during and after the disaster and discusses the hypothesis that the way in which news was created helped to promote resilience among the population.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Communication and Resilience

This work is based on the relationship between resilience and communication. Resilience is defined as “a process linking a set of adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation after a disturbance” (Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche & Pfefferbaum, 2008, p.130), whilst community resilience is “a process linking a set of networked adaptive capacities to a positive trajectory of functioning and adaptation in constituent populations after a disturbance” (Norris et al., 2008). The qualities of personal resilience (Cantoni, 2014) include: optimism; self-esteem; psychological stability (control, commitment and challenge); ability to focus on good things; and social support (listening and telling). At a community level (Patel, Rogers, Amlôt & Rubin, 2017) resilience is a product of such factors as local knowledge; community networks and relationships;

communication; health; governance; resources; preparedness; mental outlook; and economic investment.

The role of newspapers during a disaster entails the general field of “communication”. Good and reliable communication is one of the factors that make a resilient reaction possible (Norris et al., 2008), both at an individual and at a community level. Norris et al (2008, p.140) define communication as “the creation of common meanings and understandings and the provision of opportunities for members to articulate needs, views, and attitudes”. A more specific meaning that deals with information is also considered: “Information and communication become vital in emergencies. People need accurate information about the danger and behavioural options, and they need it quickly” (p.140). Finally, the consideration that “the presence of communal narratives” gives “the experience shared meaning and purpose. [...] The media shape how a disaster is framed in ways that influence both survivors’ and others’ understanding of the event, including emergency managers” (p.140).

Bronfenbrenner’s Theory and Journalism

According to Bronfenbrenner (1979), every individual deals with four different levels, starting from the nearest one (microsystem) which then goes further to the mesosystem, the exosystem and the macrosystem which is the furthest one and includes culture,

traditions and social assets. Journalism addresses the exosystem and the mesosystem and sometimes challenges the macrosystem. At a local level, journalism can shape the so-called public opinion, that includes what people think of their community. Neely (2015) analyses the experiences of young people working as journalists for school newspapers, and underlines the potentials of “empowering youth voice for building stronger local communities” and that “youth journalists find tremendous empowerment in the ability to have a voice in their communities, to represent their generation in telling their own stories, and to partner with adults in this process” (p. 2307). We therefore start from the assumption that this process could work in both directions: from and to the youth and their social environments.

METHODOLOGY

The present study analyses 168 articles with “earthquake” or its consequences as the main topic, published in *Cmj* between 24 August 2016 and 30 December 2017. The analysis covered titles, contents (body of the articles), views and dates. The outputs of the analysis of words used are divided in two main figures, to show the frequency of words in titles and contents. An analysis of how the articles were shaped in order for readers to relate to and help them deal with the situation was also carried out. The authors of

the articles are both journalists and young people, including children who live in the Macerata district.

FINDINGS

Views.

Figure 1 shows an overview of the dates when the articles were published in relation to how many times they were read (views). The graph shows peaks of readers after every main earthquake, with a concentration of readers through the emergency period. The most read article was published the same morning of the first shake, giving information on how to behave and deal with fear. In this frame of time articles were mostly informative: what to do in

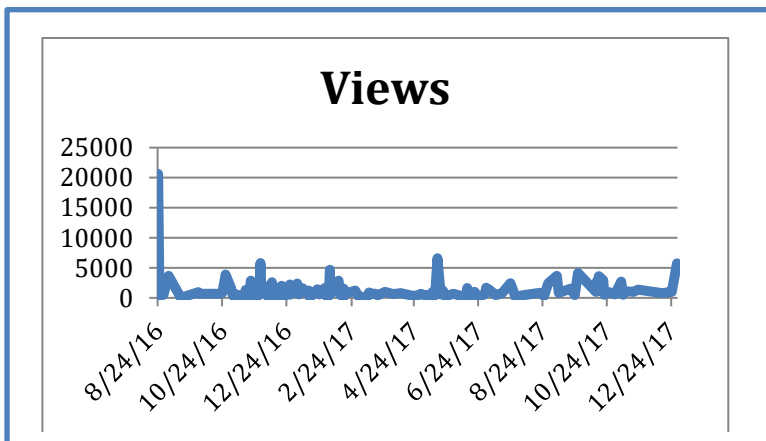


Figure 1. Article Views.

case of emergency; ways of discussing fear and emotional pain; who is helping the population and so on. The number of views decreased from February 2017 until the end of April 2017. This can also be related to the mass movement of population from the affected territory to the coast in the region. Views increased again after May 2017: people were returning to their homes following the construction of emergency shelters. The highest peak of readers coincided with a very emotional article in which a child asked the government to take action. From that point Cmj continued to write about schools, donations, demolitions, stories and voices from the territory hit by the earthquake. These articles collected a total of 194,962 views.

Titles.

Titles analysis provides an insight into the main focus of the articles. The most frequent words used in titles are “per” (76), “scuola” (29), “bambini” (25), “sisma” (19), “solidarietà” (13), “dei” (13), and “dal” (10). Figure 2 shows a visual synthesis (in Italian). The translation in English would be: “for”, “children”, “earthquake”, “solidarity”, “’s/by” (depending on the context) and “from”. We decided not to omit the 3 letter words because they contain useful information about how the messages were shaped.

For example, the word “per/for” was used in the following context: the “per” particle is related to the words “children” and “school” in many articles, indicating that something was made *for* them, in order to help them. In other titles it is related to a verb. These verbs often indicate a way to deal with the situation (“raise funds”, “be back to normal”, “forget the earthquake for a while”, “helping” and so on). Another two 3 letter words were included: “dei/’s” and “dal/from”. “Dei/’s” is often found in the titles when using the word “children”. We have children’s “drawings”, “hopes” and “dreams”. Then we have “dei” meaning “by”. So we have gifts and donations *by* several people or institutions: military, families, and children themselves. “Dal/from” is often a geographical indication from where help and solidarity arrived.

The second main word used is “school”. This resonates with Bronfenbrenner’s theory, with school being one of the main systems of the microsystem, especially for children. The articles are mainly concerned with how schools reacted to the events, such as fund raising, new solutions, events for children and families, and donations from other realities. During the emergency, schools were represented as important protective institutions for the social fabric of the affected communities.

The word “earthquake” and “solidarity” have a similar frequency. This underlines that Cmj tackled the topic whilst always pointing out the positive side of an emergency, which is

indeed the solidarity that followed and the action made possible by these new resources.



Figure 2. Most Frequent Words in Titles

Contents.

Analysis of the content provided an insight on how the messages in the articles were shaped. In this case, articles and conjunctions were excluded. The most frequently used words in the article bodies were: “per” (797), “scuola”/”scuole” (362), “bambini” (297), “non” (268), “terremoto” (252), “come” (162), “tutti” (126), “casa”/”case” (99), and “solidarietà” (94). Figure 3 shows a visual synthesis (in Italian). The words may be translated as follows:

to make the best decisions possible in the circumstances whilst drawing attention to the trauma. Additionally, the 268 “non” can be interpreted in this way: as an indication to exclude, avoid, and erase. Emotional processing is useful in developing resilience.

Four hundred and sixty one references to important places in children’s lives were also observed, primarily the school and home. The frequency of “home” is less than a third of “school”. The reason for this is that homes were a sensitive topic due to the damage and destruction caused by the earthquakes.

With regards to subjects, words that indicate the communitarian level of the emergency and its resolution were noted. Words such as “everybody” and verbs conjugated in the first person plural, were mentioned 321 times. Here, the articles addressed the reader as a part of a wider community. The community includes families, friends and also the helpers. On the other hand, there was a high use of direct speech related to the many individuals who found a voice through the newspaper. Every story, when published, let people share their problems at a wider level, often offering an implicit message: you are not alone.

This information can help people to elaborate on personal experiences in a socio-cognitive way, and encourages cognitive processes to understand the problem. However, it does this within a social relations framework: among journalists and readers,

readers and the newspaper, experts and readers, and individual stories and collective narratives.

Articles' features and resilience factors.

We synthesised the features of articles that emerged from the analysis above with the following tags: “positive side”; “what’s going on” (explanations); “we are in this together”; “who can help” (including “how can I help”) and “I have a voice”. These features are related to the resilience factors at personal or community levels. With regards to personal resilience, the “positive side” meets “optimism” and “the ability to focus on good things”. When we know “what’s going on” we also support our “psychological stability”. The collective dimension (“we are in this together”) relates to “optimism”, “psychological stability” “the ability to focus on good things” again, but also to “social support”. “Who can help” addresses “self-esteem” and “social support” as well. Finally, the possibility to “have a voice” affects “self esteem” as well as “psychological stability” and “social support”. As demonstrated here, all the main factors of personal resilience are taken into consideration by the articles. With regards to community resilience, the “mental outlook” of the community is influenced by every article’s features. “Local knowledge” is affected by the possibility of knowing “what’s going on” and “who can help”. “Community networks” are also influenced by all

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factors, apart from “positive side”. “Communication” in this case in a transversal feature, but it will most probably be most affected by information about “what’s going on” and the possibility to speak directly (“I have a voice”). “Governance”, “resources” and “economic investment” are mainly out of the direct influence of journalism, but they can be influenced by information in a transversal way. “Preparedness” relates to “what’s going on” and “who can help” while “health” has no direct connection with the articles, except from information about psychological support.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of the study, we hypothesised that the way in which news is conceived could have an influence on the resilience of the population. The results show that features of articles are most related to features of resilience both at a personal and at a community level. Explanations, information, individual and collective narratives given from a positive angle help to bolster the resilience of the community during adverse circumstances. So the design of articles and titles succeed in the intentions of possibly driving a resilient response in the audience. However, the main problem of the study was the inability to measure the impact of the articles except from measuring the views, even if the wide reach of articles could still be a good indicator of the fact that messages were able to reach the population hit by earthquakes. The next step

of the research will involve journalists, in order to expand this model of writing and to increase the awareness of professionals regarding the impact (positive or negative) that their work has on personal and community resilience.

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**PROMOTING TODDLERS' DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL-
STATE LANGUAGE AND SOCIAL COGNITION:
THE ROLE OF CONVERSATION AT NURSERY SCHOOL**
ILARIA GRAZZANI, VERONICA ORNAGHI,
ALESSIA AGLIATI AND ELISA BRAZZELLI

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Over the past three decades, there has been an explosion of research interest in how children develop social cognition - a construct encompassing a range of cognitive abilities such as understanding emotions, desires, thoughts, beliefs and other inner states, as well as socio-emotional and verbal skills (Carpendale & Lewis, 2006). The development of social cognition in children has mainly been investigated in relation to theory of mind and emotion comprehension. Theory of mind is the ability to comprehend epistemic inner states, while emotion comprehension – the specific focus of the study presented in this chapter – implies the capacity to recognize and understand emotions and affects (Harris, 1989).

The most recent studies, while acknowledging toddlers' difficulties in cooperating and coordinating their intentions with those of others, have also shown them to display impressive social cognition skills (Hughes & Devine, 2015; Reddy, 2008). For example, from the second year of life children are able to provide help, attributing their interlocutor with the intention of picking up an object that he or she

cannot reach (Tomasello, 2009). Furthermore, at around eighteen months, they acquire the ability to recognize other people's desires, even when these are counterintuitive and different to their own wishes, such as preferring raw broccoli over inviting sweets (Repacholi & Gopnik, 1997). Still more surprisingly, at around 2 years, children can correctly predict how interlocutors will behave even when this involves attributing them with a false belief (Buttelmann, Carpenter, & Tomasello, 2009), that is to say, with inaccurate knowledge of the real state of affairs.

With regards to emotion comprehension, the overall construct - mainly studied in children of three years and over - has been broken down into the understanding of different aspects of emotion, such as recognising facial expressions, comprehending the causes of emotion and realising that emotions may be regulated (Denham, 1998; Pons, Harris & de Rosnay, 2004). Nonetheless, observational research has shown that toddlers share in the emotional states of others and are able to offer comfort by recognizing sadness and distress on the part of adults and peers (e.g., Conte, Grazzani & Pepe, 2018; Hepach, Vaish, & Tomasello, 2013). Furthermore, the phenomenon of social referencing (Klinnert, Emde, Butterfield, & Campos, 1986) shows that, as early as 14 months, young children can use the facial emotional cues provided by an adult to interpret unfamiliar situations. Interestingly, from 20 months they begin to use the *emotional lexicon*

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to refer to their own and others' emotions, producing utterances such as: '*Mummy happy... John afraid... me sad*'.

This lexicon is viewed as a particular case of mental-state language, which has been broken down into a number of categories. These include physiological (tiredness, hunger), perceptual (sight, hearing), volitional (desire, need, want), emotional (anger, fear, joy), affective (love), cognitive (knowing, thinking, believing) and moral terms (obligation, being good, being naughty) (e.g. Bretherton & Beegly, 1982). This kind of lexicon first appears in the context of everyday social interactions and conversational exchanges that involve the pragmatic use of language and foster interpersonal communication and reciprocal attention to inner states.

Mental-State Language and Social Cognition: Longitudinal and Intervention Studies.

In studying the linguistic correlates and predictors of social cognition, particular attention has been paid to the link between mental-state language and children's social understanding, via research carried out using both longitudinal and training-study methods. Longitudinal investigation in this field was pioneered by Judy Dunn and her team: the group's seminal *conversational studies* with a sample of children tested in the second, third and fourth years of life, showed that children learn about feelings, beliefs and thoughts and how to talk about such concepts in the context of *discourse among family members*. Empirical

data has also indicated that mothers' discourse and language about mental states is related to children's understanding of inner states, while a number of studies have confirmed the finding that children from families in which desires and feelings are frequently discussed are more likely than their peers to succeed in theory-of-mind and emotion comprehension tasks some months later (e.g. Dunn, Brown & Beardsall, 1991). Still, other research has indicated that children's dialogue about mental states with friends and mothers predicts improvements in their false belief comprehension (Hughes & Dunn, 1998; Ruffman, Slade & Crowe, 2002; Taumoepeau & Ruffman, 2006). In addition, mothers' early use of cognitive verbs in picture-book reading has been found to be correlated with children's later understanding of mental states (Adrian, Clemente & Villanueva, 2007). Research has also suggested that mothers' explanations of emotional states in conversation predict children's emotion comprehension and false-belief explanation (Garner, Jones, Gaddy & Rennie, 1997; Liable, 2004). These findings reliably demonstrate the link between discourse and conversational practices with children and their later performance on social-cognition tasks.

Similar conclusions may be drawn from experimental research and *intervention studies*. For instance, Appleton & Reddy (1996) introduced an 'explanation within conversation paradigm' with three-year-old children, who were trained to explain the thoughts and actions of the protagonists of a series of video clips via the positive

elaboration of their answers on the part of the adult trainer. Children who had received training outperformed control-group participants on a standard false-belief task. Guajardo & Watson (2002) obtained similar outcomes with 3- to 4-year-old children exposed to social discourse. The findings provided further support for the hypothesis that social discourse influences children's theory-of-mind. Using a similar method, Lohmann & Tomasello (2003) also demonstrated that the use of mental-state verbs in discursive interaction contributes to improvements in children's social cognition. More recently, Aram, Fine & Ziv (2013) demonstrated the potential of shared reading to elicit richer conversations between parents and children and enhance the latter's social cognition abilities (for a review of these studies, see Ornaghi, Brockmeier & Grazzani, 2014).

We have adopted the intervention-study method. In line with the 'conversational and pragmatic hypothesis' underpinning the studies reviewed above, we found that the *active* use of mental-state terms in everyday conversation at kindergartner improved children's understanding of internal states (Ornaghi, Brockmeier & Grazzani Gavazzi, 2011) and their mental-state language (Grazzani Gavazzi & Ornaghi, 2011). In the latter study, the intervention focused specifically on emotional-state talk and the effect of its use on preschoolers' emotion comprehension. The children in the training group took part in conversational 'language games' (Ornaghi & Grazzani, 2013) designed to stimulate the use of selected emotional

terms from the story book. The training had a significant effect on children's performance in the comprehension of both mental-state language and emotion, especially at 3 years of age.

Overall, it may be observed that the majority of the intervention studies outlined above made use of stories and narratives. Story-reading, while deployed in different ways in the different studies, was invariably found to act as an effective and powerful means of capturing children's attention and creating a *communicative and conversational context* within which to conduct the intervention program. In the cited literature, story-telling was used as a spring-board for initiating language activities, eliciting explanations of the causes of events, telling and re-telling, perspective-taking, and so on, within conversational interactions between adults and children.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In the intervention study presented in this chapter, informed by a paradigm which, as we have seen, is now well-established (e.g. Adrian, et al. 2007; Ornaghi et al., 2011; Ornaghi, Brockmeier & Grazzani, 2014; Ornaghi, Grazzani, Cherubin, Conte & Piralli, 2015; Grazzani, Ornaghi, Agliati & Brazzelli, 2016; Turnbull, Carpendale & Racine, 2008), we adopted the *conversational approach* used in most of research reviewed above, because it reflects the social constructionist perspective underpinning our research programme. This perspective essentially assumes that, from their earliest interpersonal experiences,

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conversational activities such as explaining mental states and discussing them with other people, contribute to children's developing understanding of the mind (de Rosnay & Hughes, 2006; Ornaghi et al., 2011), helping them to transform their implicit knowledge into explicit awareness.

The research presented here offers a number of original features with respect to existing training or intervention studies using story-books and conversation.

First of all, this study was conducted in a nursery school while most of the existing research has been carried out within the family context, with the emphasis on adult-child (primarily mother-child) interaction during and after story-reading. Second, our intervention targeted children aged between two and three years, while similar studies have mainly focused on the pre-school and primary school years. The current study therefore focused on an age group that has traditionally not been involved in this kind of research. Finally, the intervention involved planned interactions between an educator who had received ad hoc training and a small group of four to six children, as opposed to dyadic interaction between an adult/caregiver and an individual child, with a view to also fostering an exchange of perspectives among children.

Thus, the aim of our study was to test the effect of a conversational intervention, conducted at nursery, both on children's use and possession of mental-state language and on their emotion

comprehension, viewed as key components of their social cognition. Given that the same type of intervention designed by our team for the current study had already yielded positive outcomes in earlier work with both preschool (Ornaghi et al., 2015) and primary school children (Ornaghi, Brockmeier & Grazzani, 2014), we expected that the toddlers in the training group would outperform the control group on the administered measures.

METHODOLOGY

Participants.

The participants in the study consisted of 65 toddlers (mean age at pre-test: 29.22 months; *SD*: 3.32; range: 24-35 months) attending four infant-toddler centres in the province of Milan. All participants came from middle-class socioeconomic backgrounds, were native Italian speakers, and their linguistic and cognitive development fell within the standards for their age group. They were evenly divided by gender and randomly assigned to an *intervention group* ($n=33$) and a *control group* ($n=32$). There were no significant differences between the two groups on any of the pre-test measures administered before the training.

The teachers were assigned to either the experimental or the control condition. They were selected on the basis of their experience and motivation to learn a new educational format involving story-reading and eliciting conversation with and among children. In a pilot

phase of the research, the teachers in the experimental group were videotaped while practicing the training activities with children and received feedback from the research team; teachers in the control group were simply shown the book that they would be required to read with the children and told that they would have the opportunity to receive the training the following year.

Research phases and instruments.

This study consisted of three phases: pre-test, intervention, and post-test for both the experimental and the control group.

Testing phase.

Before and after the intervention phase, children were individually administered the following measures in counterbalanced order: the PVB (Caselli, Pasqualetti & Stefanini, 2007), the Mental-State Lexicon Checklist (Grazzani, Ornaghi & Agliati, 2012), and the Puppet Interview (in the Italian validated version by Camodeca & Coppola, 2010); in addition, video observations were collected for each participant.

Verbal abilities were assessed via the PVB, a standardized test (Caselli et al., 2007) for children between 18 and 36 months of age based on maternal ratings. It consists of four parts. For the purposes of the current study, we administered the first part of the test evaluating the child's word production (vocabulary). Participants'

scores ranged from 0 to 100. Mental-State Lexicon was evaluated through a *checklist* of perceptive, volitional, emotional, cognitive and moral terms. Parents were required to indicate which of the terms on the checklist were part of their child's current vocabulary. Scores were assigned both for overall mental-state language and for each of the subcategories.

Emotion comprehension was assessed by means of the Puppet Interview in the Italian validated version (Camodeca & Coppola, 2010). The materials required are two puppets with blank faces and four felt discs each depicting the facial expression corresponding to a distinct basic emotion. Given the age group of the children in the present study, only four subtasks from the battery were used. These examined the ability to label emotions (expressive comprehension), recognise them (receptive comprehension), identify the causes of emotions (causes comprehension) and deploy emotion knowledge in stereotypical situations (affective perspective-taking). Participants received a score of 2 for a correct response, 1 for an incorrect response of the appropriate affective valence, and 0 for a completely inappropriate response.

The administration of these instruments at the pre-test stage ensured that the control and experimental groups were homogeneous before the intervention took place.

Video-observations: each of the children was also video recorded for 10 minutes in two different situations: free play and lunch.

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The linguistic production of each child was transcribed and coded in order to evaluate their use of the various categories of mental-state lexicon listed above.

Training phase: The intervention procedure.

Between the pre- and post-test phases, a three-month intervention took place. The children assigned to the training condition, in groups of about four to six at a time, took part in daily intervention sessions for three months. Composition of the working groups was on the basis of teacher nomination, and all groups were mixed gender. During these sessions, children listened to stories presented in an illustrated story-book (Ornaghi, Agliati & Grazzani, 2014) that had been created ad hoc for the study (Image 1).

The book contained eight stories, whose age-tuned intelligibility and appeal had been pilot tested with children who did not take part in the study. A sample story may be found in Appendix 1.

The main characters in the eight short stories are two rabbits (Beba and Ciro) who get caught up in a series of 'exciting situations' that make them alternately *scared*, *happy*, *angry* and *sad*. Each narrative follows a classical story schema: after a brief introduction, a problematic situation eliciting a particular emotion occurs, and action is undertaken to solve the problem. For example, in *Beba gets mad at the beach*, the main character (Beba) loses her temper because a



Image 1. Training group setting

cheeky bear cub snatches her bucket; with *Ciro*'s help, the conflict is resolved and the story ends happily with all three characters playing together. Furthermore, the story texts are enriched with *mental-state language* (Bartsch & Wellman, 1995) that differentiates them from those most commonly used with or aimed at early childhood audiences. The psychological terms in these stories are primarily emotional (*gets mad, is scared, is surprised, is happy*, and so on), but also include perceptive (they can't *see* anything), volitional (that train I really *wanted*) and cognitive (e.g., *decide*) expressions.

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The training sessions comprised of four steps: creation of a suitable context in which to introduce the activity, the reading of the story, conversation about the emotional theme in the story and a final stage. The crucial element of the procedure is the *conversation about emotions*, conducted with small groups of young children. Specifically, the teacher draws on the story content to focus on the *expression*, *comprehension* and *regulation* of emotion (Denham, 1998). The stimulus questions, as shown in Table 1, are designed to encourage the participation of all the children in the group, giving them the opportunity to narrate situations in which they themselves, their family members or friends, or familiar cartoon or story characters, have experienced the emotion being discussed.

This procedure, which may seem unusual for use with toddlers, acts a stimulus fostering and accelerating the development of linguistic abilities. Furthermore, given its focus on the emotional dimension of the story characters, it enhances children's ability to reflect on internal states, the relationship between private experience and manifest actions and behaviours, and individual differences in emotional experience and outward behavior (Hughes, 2011; Reddy, 2008). In contrast, after listening to the same stories, the children in the *control groups* engaged in free play with toys deliberately selected to minimize conversation amongst them.

Table 1. *Examples of Stimulus Questions in Relation to Components of Emotion Comprehension*

EMOTION COMPREHENSION	EXAMPLES OF HOW THE CONVERSATION MAY BE LAUNCHED (STIMULUS QUESTIONS)
EXPRESSING EMOTIONS (both verbal and non-verbal indicators of emotion)	<i>...and what face do you make when you are sad? ...when we are happy, we can also say that we are pleased ... or delighted ...</i>
UNDERSTANDING EMOTION CAUSES (appreciating the causes of emotion)	<i>...do you get mad too if somebody takes your toys? ...Ciro angry because</i>
REGULATING EMOTIONS (acting to control emotion)	<i>...is there something you do so as not to feel so mad?</i>

RESULTS: THE IMPACT OF THE INTERVENTION

In order to verify whether the intervention had enhanced children's language skills and emotion comprehension abilities, the data was analysed using a repeated measure analysis of variance with Time (pre/post), Group Condition (intervention/control group) and Gender as independent variables. The dependent variables were Language Ability (as evaluated by the PVB), Possession of Mental-State Vocabulary (Checklist for Parents), Spontaneous use of Mental-State Language (as recorded in the video observations), and Emotion Comprehension (Puppet Interview).

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Results showed a significant effect of Time, $F(4.61) = 55.51$; $p < .0001$; $\eta_p^2 = .877$), and a significant Time x Group interaction, $F(4.61) = 16.83$; $p < .0001$; $\eta_p^2 = .685$). More specifically, at post-test the children in the intervention group outperformed the control group on possession of mental-state language, $F(1.63) = 31.58$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .482$, spontaneous use of mental-state language, $F(1.63) = 9.01$, $p = .005$, $\eta_p^2 = .210$, and emotion comprehension, $F(1.63) = 30.65$; $p < .0001$; $\eta_p^2 = .474$. For overall language ability there was a tendency towards significant difference ($p = .06$) between the two groups at post-test. Gender was not found to have any significant interactive effect, so it was omitted from all the subsequent analyses.

Descriptive statistics for all variables by group condition at both time points are presented in Table 2.

The effect of the intervention on children's possession and use of mental state language.

At post-test, the children in the intervention group displayed significantly greater gains in their possession of mental state terms than the control group. This outcome held for all categories of mental state terms: perceptual, $F(1.63) = 23.17$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .373$, volition, $F(1.63) = 5.50$; $p = .02$; $\eta_p^2 = .124$), emotional, $F(1.63) = 16.15$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .293$), cognitive, $F(1.63) = 4.73$; $p = .04$; $\eta_p^2 = .108$), and moral, $F(1.63) = 10.77$; $p = .002$; $\eta_p^2 = .216$) terms. Given that the intervention had been focused primarily on conversation about

emotions, in Figure 1 we present the gains displayed by each of the groups in their possession of emotional-state terms. We note that whereas children in the control group went from a mean value of 12.53 at pre-test to 15.50 at post-test, participants in the intervention group went from a mean score of 8.50 at pre-test to a mean of 17.70 at post-test.

Table 2. *Means and Standard Deviations of All Variables by Group Condition*

	INTERVENTION GROUP		CONTROL GROUP	
	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
Verbal ability (<i>PVB</i>)	61.53 (21.10)	83.89 (19.74)	72.18 (26.24)	82.18 (22.48)
Possession of mental-state language (<i>Mental-state Lexicon Checklist</i>)	22.26 (12.93)	47.79 (12.37)	37.47 (16.81)	45.71 (17.25)
Spontaneous use of mental-state language (<i>Video-Observations</i>)	1.16 (1.53)	4.52 (4.43)	.71 (1.44)	1.41 (1.73)
Emotion comprehension (<i>Puppet Interview</i>)	15.37 (7.11)	26.79 (7.89)	15.58 (6.38)	18.11 (6.16)

TODDLERS' DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL STATE LANGUAGE

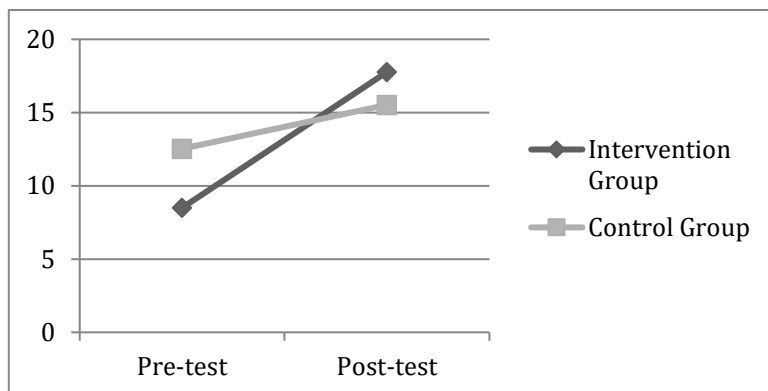


Figure 1. Possession of Emotional-State Language in the Two Groups at Pre- and Post-Test

Interestingly, spontaneous use of mental-state language in everyday interaction at nursery was also found to have improved significantly more in the intervention than in the control group (see Table 2). More specifically, the difference was significant for the spontaneous use of perceptual, $F(1.63) = 8.01$; $p = .007$; $\eta_p^2 = .131$, and emotional terms, $F(1.63) = 7.35$; $p = .009$; $\eta_p^2 = .122$). Figure 2 shows the pre- to post-test improvement in the spontaneous use of emotional-state language in both groups.

The effect of the intervention on emotion comprehension.

We also tested the efficacy of the conversational intervention on toddlers' emotion comprehension. Mean scores for each of the two groups at each of the testing phases are reported in Table 2. As

illustrated in Figure 3, the emotion comprehension, as measured by the Puppet Interview, improved significantly more in the intervention group.

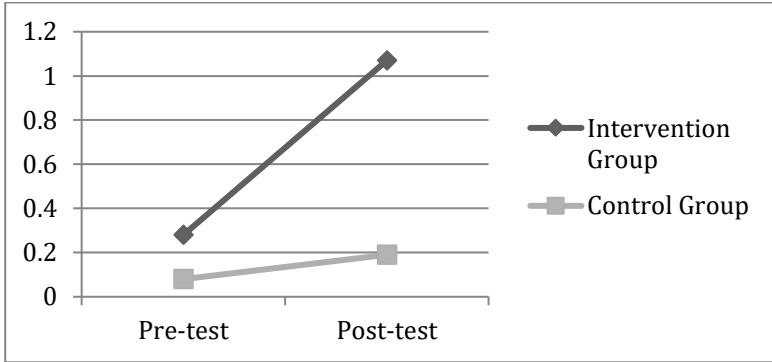


Figure 2. Spontaneous Use of Emotional-State Language in the Two Groups at Pre- and Post-Test

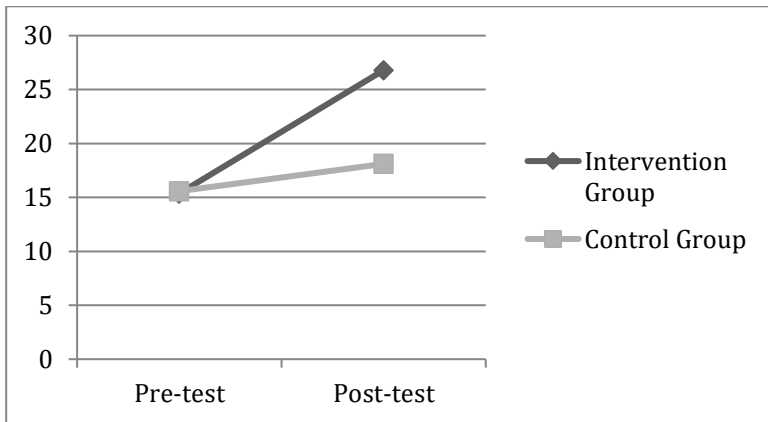


Figure 3. Emotion Comprehension in the Two Groups at Pre- and Post-Test

TODDLERS' DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL STATE LANGUAGE

We carried out further analyses in order to explore participants' improvement in emotion comprehension in greater depth, specifically by examining the intervention effect on children's performance on each of the instrument's four sub-tasks. We found a significant Time x Group interaction for expressive comprehension $F(1.63) = 14.81$; $p < .001$; $\eta_p^2 = .225$, receptive comprehension, $F(1.63) = 4.18$; $p = .04$; $\eta_p^2 = .076$, affective perspective taking, $F(1.63) = 35.61$; $p < .0001$; $\eta_p^2 = .411$, and comprehension of the causes of emotion, $F(1.63) = 5.37$; $p .02$; $\eta_p^2 = .095$.

DISCUSSION

Numerous studies, both longitudinal and experimental, have demonstrated that the language of inner states is an important correlate and predictor of social cognition. Nevertheless, as far as we know few studies have investigated this relationship in toddlers in relation to specific training procedures conducted at nursery school. We found that the intervention led to significant improvement both in terms of children's linguistic ability (definite gains in the possession and use of mental-state language as well as a tendency towards improvement in general language ability) and in terms of their social cognition, specifically their emotion comprehension.

The educators, who were trained and supervised by our research team, conducted the conversation sessions with the toddlers according to specific criteria whilst taking a gradual approach. At the

beginning of the training programme, they concentrated on reading the stories and checking that the children had understood them and had become familiar with the story characters.

The conversations were initially very simple: the children listened, observed the pictures and replied to questions (directed at individual children or at the group as a whole) about the more ‘superficial’ aspects of the narrative (e.g. “What colour is Ciro’s mum?”; “Where is Ciro’s dad?”; “Is this the bush that Ciro hid behind?”).

Flexibly responding to the children’s interest in the story details, the educators began to gradually direct the toddlers’ attention towards the story characters’ facial expressions (e.g. “What kind of face is Beba making here?”; “What is Ciro doing here? Look at his eyes”). During this phase of the intervention, the children’s verbal-conversational input to the process was relatively limited; they mainly repeated single words uttered by the educators (e.g. “He’s scared”) or imitated the story characters’ facial expressions when invited to do so by the educator (e.g. “Show me what you do when you’re scared”; “And you, Mary, let’s see what kind of face you make when you’re happy...”).

Once the children had been adequately familiarised with the intervention format, the teachers increased the complexity of the conversational activity by helping the children to relate the story they had just heard to their own personal experiences, focusing first on the

TODDLERS' DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL STATE LANGUAGE

causes (“And what are you scared of?”) and then on the regulation of emotions (“What do you do to stop feeling angry?”). The toddlers’ initial responses to these questions were linked to the experience of the story characters (“At home I’m afraid of the drill”, just like the story character), as though they were activating a mechanism of repetition and imitation of what they had just heard. Finally, towards the end of the intervention, the children’s linguistic production improved, both in terms of the length of their utterances and in terms of making attempts to speak about themselves in an original manner by linking aspects of the emotional script to their personal experience (e.g. “When I want a toy car and my dad says no, I feel all red, red in the face, in my eyes, in my arms, in my legs, in my tummy...”). Thus, at the later training sessions, less time was devoted to reading the story and more time was spent conversing about the events narrated in the story.

The process of change undergone by the children – from repeating and imitating the comments of the educator and parts of the story script, to speaking about themselves in original terms – was reflected in an increased spontaneous production of mental-states terms, compared to their peers in the control group. This process was helped along by the fact that the educators progressively dropped their own initial *repetitive* conversational style, characterized by simple and brief utterances, and adopted an *elaborative* conversational style, featuring longer and more complex units of discourse (Fivush, Haden

& Reese, 2006; Laible & Song, 2006). Analysis of the children's spontaneous use of mental-state language showed that, despite their young age, they had benefited from being exposed to this conversational style. Specifically, our participants showed that they had internalised both the emotional scripts and the appropriate language for discussing emotional everyday life situations arising at nursery. For example, during a video-recorded play session, a child who had participated in the intervention pretended that there was a wolf and said: "Here comes the wolf!" (cause); "I'm scared!" (labelling the emotion); "I feel like crying" (expression), "Let's hide!" (regulation). In another video observation, a child turned to her educator saying: "Can you come, because I'm here on my own and I'm so sad". Subsequently, to her playmate: "If you do that, I'll be sad and Paola (the educator) will be mad".

The children that took part in the intervention also displayed enhanced emotion comprehension abilities in the structured tasks that we administered to them: namely, at post-test they were better able to label emotions, recognise them on the basis of facial cues, understand their situational causes and adopt the perspective of another person experiencing an emotion, than their peers who had not benefitted from the intervention.

CONCLUSION

The positive outcomes of our research suggest the value of early intervention with children in extra-familial educational contexts, such as the infant-toddler centre, conducted with a view to promoting the development of children's socio-cognitive and emotional abilities and harnessing the benefits of story-reading and conversing about psychological contents. The educators in our study who experienced new modes of teacher-children shared-book reading interaction and conversation, found that this also enabled them to modify and enrich their daily educational practice. Specifically, when reading to the children, they shifted from a practice of predominantly naming and describing objects to one of focusing more closely on the inner states of story characters and progressed from a repetitive to an elaborative conversational style. We believe that these findings can provide practical direction for innovative modes of intervention in socio-educational contexts, even with very young children.

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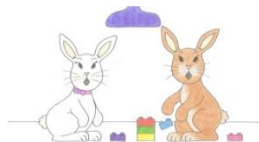
Appendix 1

The dark is scary!



Ciro and Beba are in their room. They are playing with building blocks. It's fun to play together!

They want to try to build a very high tower, with lots of different colors.



They are busy playing, when suddenly the light goes out.

Oooh, it's so dark... and the two little rabbits can't see anything. This is scary!



TODDLERS' DEVELOPMENT OF MENTAL STATE LANGUAGE

They stay still because they don't know what to do. They can't see anything at all in the dark.

Beba feels like crying, but Ciro yells loudly for their Mom.



Luckily the light soon comes back on.

Beba and Ciro don't feel scared any more. They smile and go back to building their tower.

**RESILIENCE AND PERSONALITY:
A CROSS CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE**
DENIS FLORES AND DASHA SIMONOV

INTRODUCTION

Adversity is a fact of life. However, human beings have some capacity to recover after being subjected to it, generally regarded as resilience. Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make a person resilient. These include having a positive attitude, being generally optimistic, the regulation of emotions and the ability to see failure as a helpful form of feedback. More specifically, psychological resilience has been defined as “the ability to cope with a crisis or to return to pre-crisis status quickly” (De Terte & Stephens, 2014) and resilience exists when the person uses “mental processes and behavior in promoting personal assets and protecting an individual from the potential negative effects of stressors” (Fletcher & Sarkar, as cited in Robertson, Cooper, Sarkar & Curran, 2015, p.534). Additionally, “resilience is being able to withstand or overcome adversity and unpleasant events and successfully adapt to change and uncertainty”. (McEwan, 2011, p. 2)

There is a considerable body of research on cross-cultural resilience, or resilience in individualist and collectivist

RESILIENCE AND PERSONALITY

communities. Resilience has been shown to be a culturally and contextually sensitive construct (Ungar, 2008). Cultural resilience considers how cultural background (i.e. culture, cultural values, language, customs, norms) helps individuals and communities overcome adversity. The notion of cultural resilience suggests that individuals and communities can deal with and overcome adversity not just based on individual characteristics alone, but also with the support of larger sociocultural factors (Clauss-Ehlers, 2010).

THE NEW RESILIENCE SCALE

The origin of this research interest lies in the military context when resilience was relatively new and was being used to address burnout and combat fatigue. It has since become an integral element of recruit training and soldier fitness programmes. Flores and Shin (2008) identified the potential benefits of assessment of situational safety awareness, improved decision making capabilities, task performance and safety alertness, much of which contribute to resilience. A follow up study (Flores & Shin, 2009) focused on the systematic development of a psychometrically sound scale and provided a method of measuring resilience, referred to here as the New Resilience Scale. Overall, the test has excellent

internal reliability. Cronbach's alpha, which demonstrates how much all the items correlate (and seem to measure one concept) was applied and this was found to be 0.917. A further examination of the test with the omission of items that had a restricted range showed a slightly lower level. Removing questions makes the scale slightly less reliable, so it has been retained as a 75 item scale.

The purpose of the current study is to further validate the validity of the New Resilience Scale and use it to begin a series of cross-cultural studies.

An early discussion of a resilience model identified resilience as: goal directed, risk avoidant, understanding of critical situations, having information and resources, constructive perceptions, performing positive adaptive behaviour, creative problem solving (bricolage), tolerance for uncertainty and having multiple skills (virtual role systems) (Mallak, 1998). Another model was based on what the authors called the seven C's:

- Community
- Competence
- Connections
- Commitment
- Communication

- Coordination
- Consideration (Horne & Orr, 1998)

Based on this and other research, the model used for the development of the New Resilience Scale was resilience as a process.



Figure 1. Resilience as a Process (Flores & Simonov, 2009)

Resilience can be seen as an everyday process. Each stage can occur at a different time. Individuals perceive the situation, adjust to it in a variety of ways, assess options

objectively (norms, people, cognitive search - more options are better), choose an action depending on the assessment and apply coping mechanisms. The process of recovery can then take place. A malfunction at any stage can impair or prevent later resilience processes.

The New Resilience Scale was based on extensive research from military and civilian operational occupations and utilised a large Australian database. There was significant item analysis (overall alpha .917) and review, resulting in a 75 item scale measuring five dimensions.

Threat Perception: Perceptive ability or situational awareness, awareness of potential or actual problems or threats and formulating a plan to continue.

Adjustment: Ability to adjust when unexpected events cause disruption, assessment of recovery options, flexibility, and openness to new circumstances

Decision Making: Decision making of recovery action, ability to make clear decisions when in stressful situations

Coping: Capacity to deal with difficult issues as they arise, operation of one's recovery coping mechanisms, accepting that change in approach is required

Recovery: Returning to normality quickly after hardship.

CROSS-CULTURAL COMPARISON

The study consisted of a comparison of resilience between Australian and Maltese participants. The data from the original Australian participants was compared to the results of the New Resilience Scale for Maltese students. The research questions included the following: Is there a difference in resilience across cultures? If so, how might this be explained? Does culture improve or impair resilience?

METHODOLOGY

The New Resilience Scale was administered to two different national groups, from Australia and Malta. The Australian sample consisted of 150 applicants for operational roles, manufacturing managers, employees and human resources professionals. 65% were male and 35% were female. In most cases (65%), the tests were administered at assessment centres for candidates for transport-based operational roles in Melbourne, Australia. The participants were invited to complete the New Resilience Scale and were advised that it was not part of the selection process but a research project for which they could voluntarily provide data. The remainder (35%) were managers and human resources professionals who agreed to take the test as part of resilience workshops and resilience training.

The Maltese sample sample consisted of 143 psychology students at the University of Malta. 26 were male (18.2%) and 101 were female (70.6%) with 16 unspecified (11.2%). The majority (79%) were aged 18-25 and also full time students (88%). Maltese was the predominant native language for 73% of these participants.

The participants were assessed during undergraduate psychology classes in two separate groups. They all volunteered to participate in return for a brief report on their resilience score. In order to place the concept of resilience in context, each administration was preceded by a showing of the gold medal race of speed skating at the Seoul Winter Olympics. The race was won by the Australian rank outsider, Stephen Bradbury, who came from a long way behind to win after all the other competitors fell.

The video was used to demonstrate resilience and encourage the students to participate enthusiastically even though it was not a formal part of their course. After each administration, scores were obtained and shared. A brief discussion was held on what might be the differences, if any, between the Maltese group and the Australian group. The Maltese were asked a specific question. Who did they think would be the more resilient, Maltese or Australian?

FINDINGS

Table 1 illustrates that the Australian group demonstrated a much higher level (21.6% higher) of overall resilience, with a mean of 332 out of a maximum score of 450, compared with 273 for the Maltese group. Moreover, the Australian group scored higher on each of the individual dimensions, Threat Perception (7.4%), Adjustment (24.8%), Decision Making (20.3%), Coping (17.7%) and Recovery (38.5%)

The questions of the Maltese group regarding resilience across the two cultural groups elicited a strong view that the Australian group would be more resilient. The reasons centred on the belief that the Maltese youth were overly protected and not sufficiently individualistic.

Age and experience may also be a factor here. The vast majority of the Maltese group were under the age of 25 and students, whilst the Australian group averaged 38 years and had at least ten years work experience.

Table 1. *Resilience Scores Across Cultural Groups*

Malta Sample	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Threat Perception	46	34	80	55.789	8.2665
Adjustment	55	25	80	55.359	9.2305
Decision Making	49	28	77	51.796	9.6564
Coping	39	38	77	59.683	7.9252
Recovery	66	22	88	50.951	9.3231
Overall Resilience	211	159	370	273.092	34.3468
Australian Sample	Range	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Threat Perception	31	48	79	59.925	5.983
Adjustment	35	49	84	69.086	7.4386
Decision Making	31	45	76	62.29	6.1914
Coping	30	54	84	70.237	7.0069
Recovery	39	48	87	70.591	8.7535
Overall Resilience	27	318	345	332.129	27.0197

CONCLUSIONS

The New Resilience Scale is a useful tool in the assessment of resilience. Previous studies show the scale has high internal reliability, as well as face and construct validity (as expected, it measures aspects of resilience in accordance with the process model of resilience). The current study looks at the validity of

the scale in a cross-cultural context. Evidence from this study further supports the view that the scale is a valid measure of resilience, as results are consistent with what would be expected from both cultural and age differences between the Australian and Maltese samples.

We can conclude that when resilience is viewed as a process it can be learned and developed. Resilient people can adjust quickly to their given situation. They can recover from negative events and make the best possible judgments, and they can adapt more successfully in response to major life events and traumatic experiences. This is consistent with Dawes' work that resilient people are directed to outcomes with realistic expectations. They know and do what is important. They feel influential and in control and show optimism and know that there are always good and bad cycles. They are open to input from others, show empathy, respond appropriately and manage emotions effectively. (Dawes, 2012)

It is recommended that future studies expand on this cross-cultural research, validating the scale in other cultures, and with other age groups. Future research could also focus on developing the process of resilience in participants: Is it implicit through language and ideology? Can it be identified through promoting certain coping styles and social support?

How do cultural factors affect the process of resilience? Can it be trained as is hypothesised? What current techniques would be most successful at training process resilience? Would improvements be long lasting?

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr Gottfried Catania from the University of Malta for his contribution to the gathering and subsequent analysis of the Maltese data

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PART 2
PROGRAMMES AND
INTERVENTIONS

CARE: A COMMUNITY-BASED RESILIENCE

TRAINING PROGRAMME

MOIRA CHIODINI, PATRIZIA MERINGOLO

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FRAMEWORK

CARE (Community Actions for Resilience and Empowerment) is a community-based approach that aims to promote resilience among individuals, groups and communities. CARE is an original training and intervention programme developed by LabCom (academic spin-off for the promotion of psychosocial well-being) under the scientific supervision of University of Florence. (Chiodini & Meringolo, 2018; Meringolo, Chiodini & Nardone 2016). The theoretical framework of CARE construes resilience as a community based phenomenon. Masten, Best and Garmezy (1990) defined resilience as a positive adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances and analysed three aspects of childhood resilience: a) positive outcomes in high-risk children, (b) sustained competence in children under stress and (c) recovery from trauma. They concluded that human psychological development may be highly buffered, and the long-lasting consequences of adversity are usually counterbalanced, by protective processes embedded in the caregiving system. Children quickly learn to respond to unfavourable events, gain problem-solving

capabilities, develop personal relationships and become more confident about the options available to them.

The relationship between resilience and empowerment is an interesting issue. Brodsky explored this in risky populations, such as women living in Afghanistan (Brodsky, 2003; Brodsky et al., 2011; Brodsky & Scheibler, 2011), concluding that in difficult situations it might be preferable to have a resilience-related goal than empowerment, particularly when the risk is relevant, when the needed change requires different resources and processes, or when only a “Status Quo” is possible instead of a “Transformative Status Quake” (that is, a second level change). As we will see below, in our CARE model, this dichotomy is not absolute, because it is possible to think of actions that are able to hold together resilience and empowerment processes.

Over the years, the resilience construct has been used to describe the adaptive capabilities of individuals (Bonanno, 2004; Butler, Morland & Leskin, 2007; Rutter, 1993; Werner & Smith, 1982), communities (Brown & Kulig, 1996-1997; Sonn & Fisher, 1998) and societies (Adger, 2000; Godschalk, 2003). Talking about resilient communities is, nevertheless, quite different from talking about resilient individuals; the resilient community has specific qualities that can only operate at a collective level. As Brown and Kulig (1996-1997) revealed, people in a community are resilient together, and not simply in similar ways.

Most of the scientific literature on community resilience refers to sudden disasters or traumatic events of limited duration, that are due to natural, technological or human causes, but several of the existing models may also be applied to other types of stressors or collective events. It is one of the topics studied in emergency psychology, which focuses on critical and adverse events that cannot be dealt with using standard coping skills. Most of the research has explored extraordinary events, although the scientific literature also underlines the impact of frequent minor stressful events. Community responses to minor events differ in ways that are contingent on differences in the sense of community (Sonn & Fisher, 1998), social capital (Kawachi, 1999) and collective efficacy (Sampson, Raudenbush & Earls, 1997). Community resilience is a dimension of recovery, involving effective deployment of instrumental resources to supporting recovery after harm (Paton & Johnston, 2001). The community, through members' collective actions or reading and understanding of the environment, and skills in building and co-creating new common meanings, is able to develop resilient processes (Pfefferbaum, Reissman, Pfefferbaum, Klomp & Gurwitch, 2005).

Norris, Stevens, Pfefferbaum, Wyche and Pfefferbaum (2008) identified some key characteristics of resilient communities, describing resilience as a set of networked adaptive capabilities and resources, such as economic development, social capital, information and communication, and community competence. Norris offered a

model setting out the preconditions for the development of adaptive community skills: 1) development of economic resources and reduction of inequities and social vulnerability; 2) promotion of access to social capital with the involvement of local people; 3) improvement of pre-existing networks and relationships for mobilising emergency and support services; 4) informal and naturally occurring social support; 5) planning, but also the flexibility to not have a plan, and the building of effective and trusted information and communication resources.

The concept of a community narrative, which provides experiences with a shared meaning related to individual and collective vision, has emerged as an important aspect of community resilience. Having a shared interpretation of reality may increase the strength of social bonds and increase community cohesion generally, which in turn increases community resilience. After collective tragedy community narratives facilitate the recovery of the whole community (Norris, et al., 2008).

CARE MODEL

The CARE model focuses on increasing levels of factors related to interpersonal and social support, coping strategies, problem solving abilities, self-efficacy, networking and intra-community relationships, and social capital in the forms of shared norms, shared values, trust,

cooperation and reciprocity (Chiodini & Meringolo, 2018; Meringolo, et al., 2016).

The model, which follows a systemic approach, consists of four related phases (research, training, implementation of actions, and evaluation) and focuses on three priority areas:

- The ability to promote a close and caring relationship (as in Werner, 1982);
- Improvement of social support and the perceived social support;
- Problem-solving capability, particularly creative problem solving.

First phase: Qualitative research.

The CARE model pays attention to the importance of a qualitative approach to collect data, optimise information and promote the involvement of all social actors. It is based on action-research, with training, intervention and evaluation as related parts of the same system. The first phase of the CARE process is the collection and analysis of data about the community context and the groups that make up the community. Tools suitable for collecting qualitative data include an adaptation of the Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit (CART) survey (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013; Pfefferbaum, Neas, Pfefferbaum, Norris & Van, 2013) focus groups; and interviews with stakeholders. The CART is based on four linked domains that

contribute to community resilience: *connection and caring, resources, transformative potential* and *disaster management*. The primary value of CART is its contribution to “community participation, communication, self-awareness, cooperation, and critical reflection and its ability to stimulate analysis, collaboration, skill building, resource sharing, and purposeful action” (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013, p. 250). The underlying set of principles, drawn from research and practice, allows the creation and application of interventions to build community resilience (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013). The principles include:

- *A multihazard approach* to enhance resilience to a broad array of potential adversities;
- *A community assessment* to identify the community’s assets, challenges, specific vulnerabilities and the potential threats it faces from disasters and other adversities;
- *Engaging the community*, focusing particularly on traditionally under-served and under-represented groups, reinforcing connections and empowering community members;
- *Bioethical principles* for professional and organisational behaviour and research with human subjects, even in emergency situations;

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- *Focus on both assets and needs* in accordance with the community psychology perspective that emphasises strengths and resources as well as needs; and
- *Skill development*, i.e. fostering local people's skills and promoting personal, family and organisational resilience in the community through developing people's skills in leadership, team building, communication and risk management.

Second phase: Experiential training.

The training is based on the 'learning by doing' approach. People work in small groups. Role-playing and case discussion promotes discussion and fosters coping abilities, problem solving strategies and communication capabilities. Specific activities are designed in order to acquire skills related to the three main domains of resilience, namely effective communication, empathy and emotional atonement; creative problem solving; and interpersonal and social support.

Effective communication.

In order to promote effective communications skills, the CARE model refers to the work of the scientist who did more than any other to improve knowledge in the field of the human communication, Watzlawick, whose *Pragmatics of Human Communication*, published in 1967, is the basis for understanding the effects of communication on human actions and the role of communication in the development

of abilities and skills (Watzlawick, Beavin & Jackson, 1971). We include in our definition of communication skills the use of non-verbal (including posture and body movements), para-verbal and verbal communication to create empathy and effective relationships by, for example, asking rather than stating; tuning in to other people's perspectives and using images, aphorisms and metaphors (Nardone & Salvini, 2004).

Creative problem solving.

The CARE model draws on key studies on problem solving, creativity and decision-making. An example of the first is problem solving based on the strategic logic model, an action planning model based on setting objectives and problems to solve, rather than on respecting the theory of reference. The strategic logic model takes into account ambiguities and non-linear dynamics (i.e. circular causality, communicative paradoxes) within phenomena, and uses paradoxes, contradictions, prophecies and self-deception as actual operational tools. (Nardone, 2009).

Social support.

Social support has been described as support accessible to an individual through social ties to other individuals, groups, and the larger community (Brewin, Andrews & Valentine, 2000). Social support and perceived social support are important for developing

wellbeing and enhancing one's resilience to stress. A peer group support technique, inspired by Akhurst and Kelly (2006), is used to enhance people's ability to support each other. This structured, step-by-step technique promotes free expression without fear of judgement, giving time for self-reflection.

Third phase: Implementation of the actions.

At the end of the training participants are invited to design and implement new strategies for promoting personal and community resilience. The effective implementation of an action plan largely depends on raising awareness among the key stakeholders and on participants sharing their newly acquired skills with colleagues and others. Events, workshops and conferences are useful tools for building and maintaining partnerships and implementing an action plan. The CARE model places great emphasis on identifying the characteristics of the different groups in a community and selecting the most appropriate strategies and tools to address each need. Action plans and implementation support are tailored to a specific group or community. For example, one school might be interested in supporting teachers to work with problematic groups of students, whereas another might be more interested in increasing the teamwork capability of its staff.

Fourth phase: Evaluation.

The actions that have been implemented are evaluated in order to design more effective actions and plans. The CARE model adopts a new model of evaluation, the Community Impact (CI) model (Meringolo Volpi & Chiodini, 2019), because it considers impact and change as two aspects of a cycle of change, namely, impact evaluation supports change and the change process creates a new impact. The CI model allows interventions to be evaluated whilst improving the communities where it is applied.

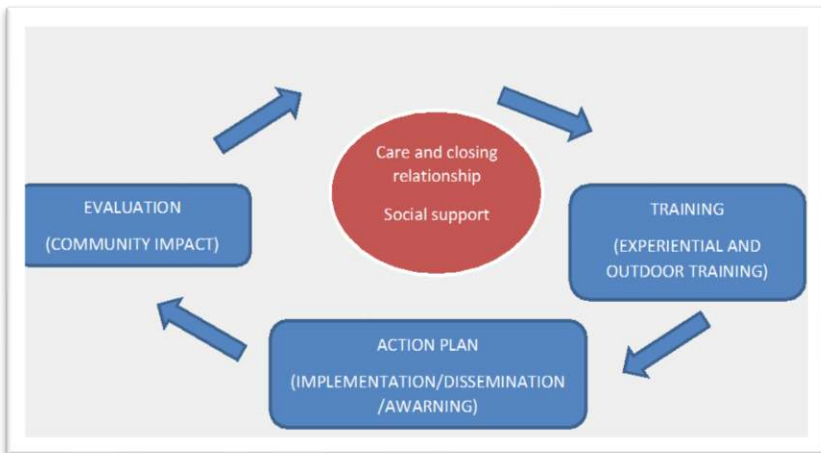


Figure 1. CARE Model

PRESENT STUDY

In the following sections we present the results of the application of the CARE model to the ‘Resilience and Life Style’ project, a regional project involving more than 1000 teachers in about 60 high schools, aimed at increasing communities’ and schools’ resilience, by supporting teachers to help students.

METHODOLOGY

Participants consisted of 50 high school teachers who attended the training sessions of the ‘Resilience and Life Style’ project” (94% females). A 3-day residential training programme was carried out, based on the contents of the Second Phase: Experiential Training of the CARE Model. A questionnaire was completed by participants at the end of the training sessions. The questionnaire included the Brief Resilient Coping Scale (Sinclair & Wallston, 2004) and the CART Survey (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013). The Brief Resilient Coping Scale (BRCS) is a unidimensional measure which identifies the tendency to cope adaptively with stress. It consists of four items rated on a 5-point scale. The CART Survey assesses communities’ resilience by identifying strengths and challenges related to the four CART domains (connection and caring, resources, transformative potential and disaster management). It consists of 21 items on a 6-point scale.

In this study, an adapted Italian version of the instrument was used.

Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out. A paired sample t-test was conducted to analyse significant changes in BRCS scores of participants tested at Time 1 and at Time 2. On the other hand, an open-ended question on the main challenges in participants' schools, was explored using Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2012). In the qualitative analysis, researchers defined codes, sub-themes and themes emerging from both the pre-test and post-test. In order to explain their "size" compared to the entire amount of data, researchers also identified the frequency of themes and sub-themes and analysed possible differences between pre and post test. The mean scores of each item as well the domains of CART were also computed. Subsequently, the main strengths and challenges of community resilience were identified on the basis of high and low scores on CART.

RESULTS

Table 1 shows that there was a statistically significant difference between the pre and post mean scores on the Brief Resilience Coping Scale, revealing an increased self-efficacy, problem-solving and coping ability amongst the participants at post intervention.

Table 1. *Results of the Brief Resilience Coping Scale pre-test and post-test*

VARIABLE	t	Sig.	Group	M
Brief Resilience Coping Scale (BRCS)	-2.87	0.01	PRE Questionnaire Score	3.35
			POST Questionnaire Score	3.86

The qualitative analysis of the post-test open-ended question revealed a decrease of the frequency of the theme “Relationship with students” (f=47 in the pre-test; f=29 in the post-test, where f stands for frequency) (Figures 2 and 3). In fact, during the training with teachers, several problem-solving strategies and instruments were provided to help participants cope with such issues. This might have led participants to pay more attention to other issues that might affect their work as well.

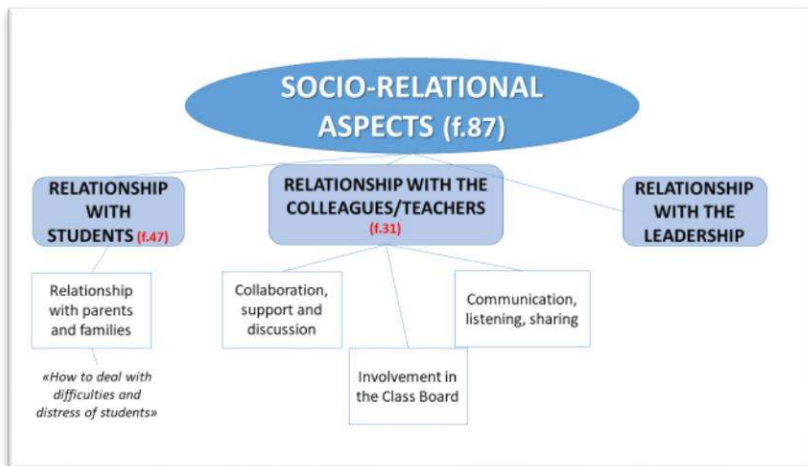


Figure 2. Qualitative Analysis: Pre-Test

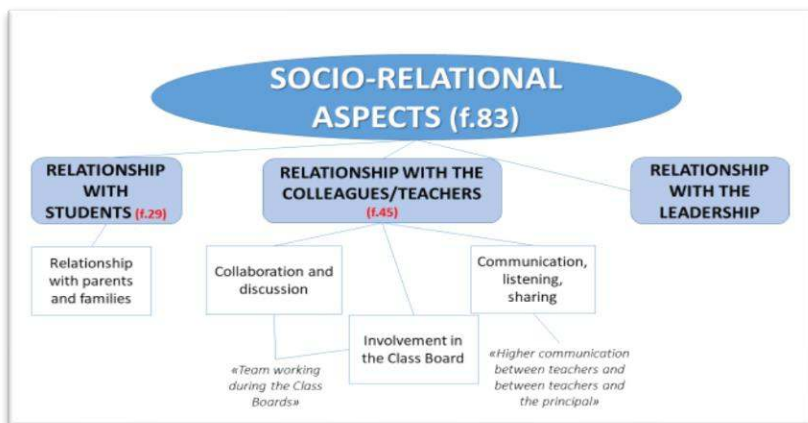


Figure 3. Qualitative Analysis: Post-Test

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Participants were also asked to answer the items of the CART Survey in order to detect the Perceptions of Community Resilience. Figure 4 shows that the primary community resilience strength was associated with information. Information and communication can foster connection and care, and contribute to a critical reflection within the community (Pfefferbaum et al., 2013). The primary community resilience challenge was associated with resources. Figure 5 shows that the participants had the least trust in public officials and thus it was an important challenge to face.

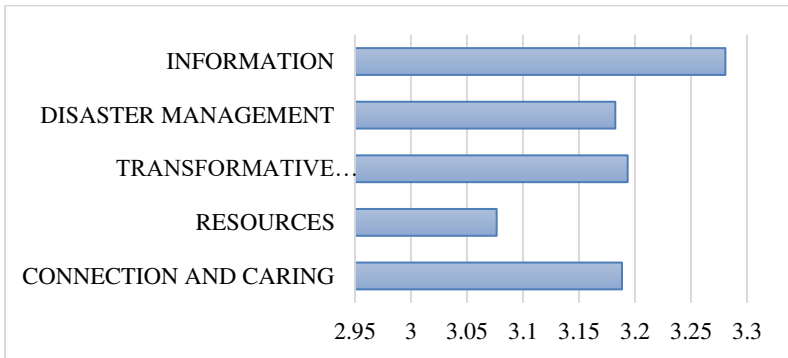


Figure 4. Community Resilience Dimensions

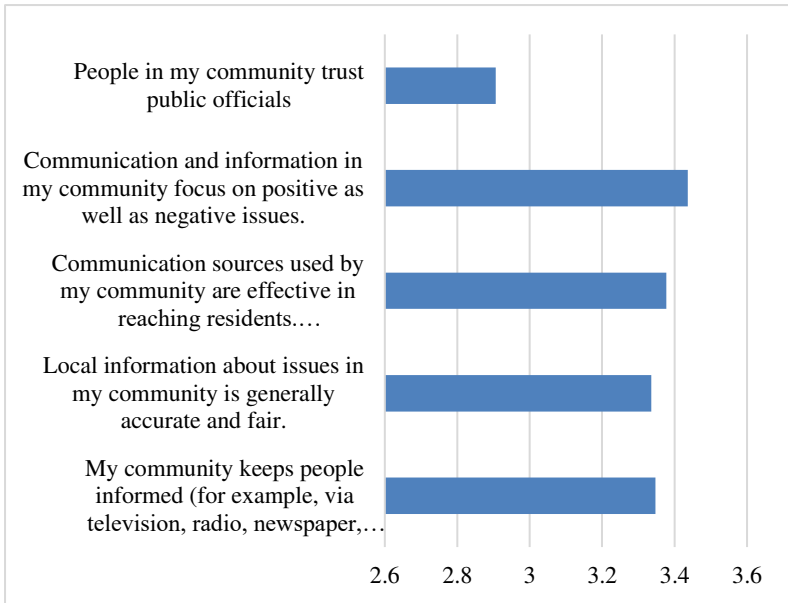


Figure 5. Information

As we can see from Figure 6 the highest rate of agreement in the connection and caring dimension was associated with the item “People in my community are committed to the well-being of the community” whilst the least agreement was associated with the item “My community treats people fairly no matter what their background is”.

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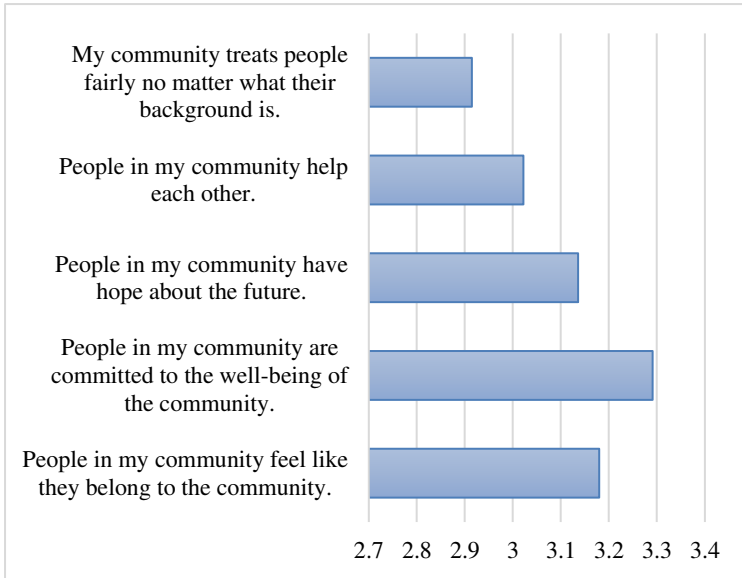


Figure 6. Connection and Caring

The most critical item in relation to Resources was lack of capability to get services that people need (Figure 7), whilst the least agreed item on Transformative Potential was “People in my community communicate with leaders who can help improve the community”, indicating a potential lack of effective leadership (Figure 8). Figure 9 shows that the community had a lack of services and programmes to help people after a disaster, possibly related to a low of perception of disasters risk.

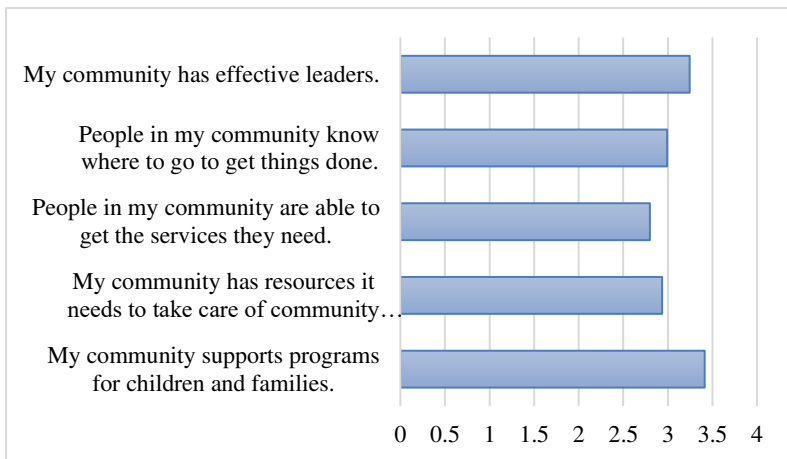


Figure 7. Resources

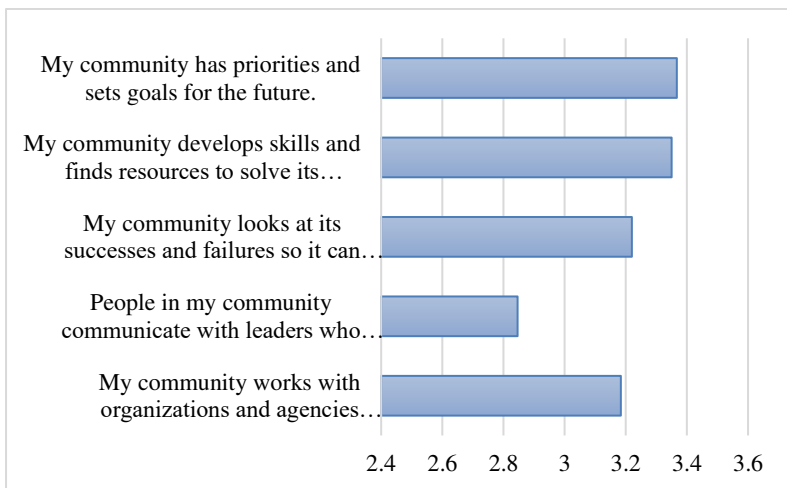


Figure 8. Transformative Potential

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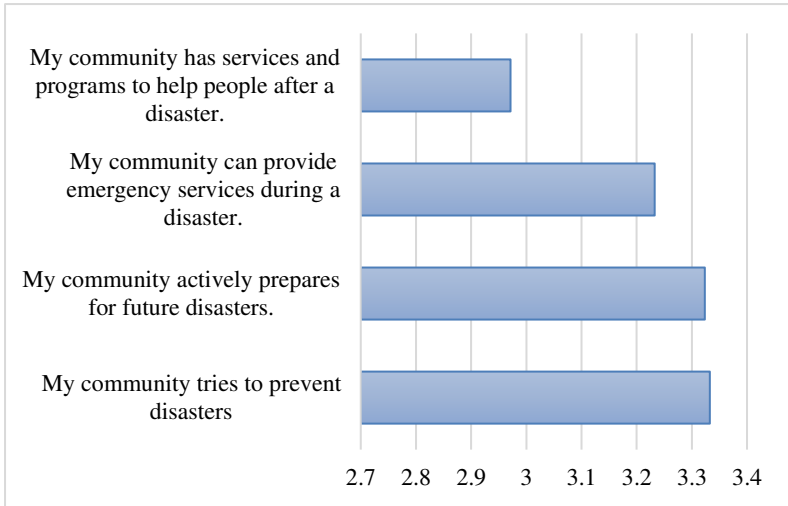


Figure 9. Disaster Management

CONCLUSION

CARE promotes resilience among individuals, groups and communities. The programme uses a systemic, community-based approach to enhance resilience on the basis of circular logic. It employs an action-research approach that creates effective relationships between research, training, intervention and evaluation. The intervention, promoting awareness, skills and capabilities, may energise and empower the whole local community, thus strengthening shared values and capacity for critical reflection, creating reference points and improving cooperation and communication.

The application of the CART Assessment Survey instrument in the present study demonstrated the importance of information and communication, and connection and care (i.e. promotion of close and caring relationship) in promoting resilience and empowerment. The transformative potential can be supported using effective strategies of problem solving and developing cooperation with colleagues and trust in local officers. The pre-post questionnaires demonstrated the effectiveness of a programme that works in a circular way and which is based on research, experiential training, implementation of actions, and evaluation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project was supported by the Italian Ministry of Education, University and Research; the Tuscan Regional Educational Office; the Tuscan Health Education Public Service; and the Centre for Health Research, Education and Promotion at the University of Siena. The project was coordinated by the Tuscan Regional Office.

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RESILIENCE PROMOTION IN PORTUGAL:

RESCUR IN ACTION

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SIMÕES, CÁTIA BRANQUINHO, TÂNIA GASPAR AND
MARGARIDA GASPAR DE MATOS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a set of three studies developed in Portugal under the framework of resilience promotion, more specifically RESCUR, a European resilience curriculum for early and primary education, developed in a Comenius project (2012-2015) involving a partnership among the University of Malta, University of Crete, University of Lisbon, Orebro University, University of Pavia, University of Zagreb (Cefai, Cavioni, et al., 2015). RESCUR is a universal programme that is implemented at school, with a particular focus on the needs of specific groups of children facing challenges or adversities, such as children with disabilities or those with special educational needs, children from minorities and refugees (Cefai et al., 2014). The curriculum targets children from four to twelve years old (covered in three manuals; early years, early primary and late primary), as well as the school community and

their families. It focuses on six main themes: Developing Communication Skills; Establishing and Maintaining Healthy Relationships; Developing a Growth Mindset; Developing Self Determination; Building on Strengths; and Turning Challenges into Opportunities. Each session follows a sequenced structure including: a mindfulness activity; storytelling (stories created specifically for the curriculum with two mascots as main characters for the early years and early primary); analysis of the story, transfer to real life situations and to children's experiences; practical, cooperative activities, such as games, role plays, or visual arts; and finally a take home activity (Cefai, Cavioni, et al., 2015). The curriculum was developed to be implemented in schools by teachers (Cefai, Miljević-Riđički, et al., 2015a). Since research shows that families are key elements in this process, RESCUR also includes a parents' manual to support and reinforce the promotion of resilience at home.

Preliminary results from the pilot study conducted in the six partner countries showed very positive results. The curriculum, including its activities and resources, were highlighted by the teachers as interesting, useful and ready to use. Competence acquisition, changes in behaviour and in the classroom climate were also mentioned by teachers and

students as a positive outcome of the implementation (Cefai, Cavioni et al, 2015).

By recognising the need to assess the impact of the RESCUR curriculum whilst also promoting the social and emotional competences in children and young people in situations of greater adversity, such as migrant and/or refugee children, the RESCUR into Action (RIA) project was designed and implemented across a full scholastic year in Portuguese schools (Simões et al., in press). RIA (2017-2018) was a research-action project, which aimed to promote the development of resilience-related competences in the classroom, in schools with migrant and/or refugee students, through the implementation of RESCUR. RESCUR into Action was funded by Ciência Viva, a national agency for scientific and technologic culture, and took place in three school districts where the number of migrant and/or refugee children and youth has increased substantially in the last years.

Apart from the evaluation of the impact of RESCUR on students' behaviour, RESCUR into Action also aimed to study the resilience of teachers. When applied to teachers, resilience has been defined as “the capacity to maintain equilibrium and a sense of commitment and agency in the everyday worlds in which teachers work” (Gu & Day, 2013, p. 26). The area of teacher resilience is relatively new, and

particularly in Portugal, only a limited number of studies have directly examined teachers' resilience. Therefore, it is necessary to explore key factors and interventions that allow us to determine how to enhance and facilitate teachers' resilience.

Finally, a study aiming at looking into the suitability of RESCUR with pre-kindergarten children and necessary adaptations was conducted and its results are presented within this work. Several authors have found positive results with the application of preventive programmes in this area at early ages, highlighting benefits in emotional education and personal and social skills, learning and understanding of nonverbal language, thinking about problem solutions and teamwork, as well as in quality of life and well-being and academic outcomes (Antunes, 2005, Cró & Pinho, 2016; Rosa & Holzmann, 2008).

METHODOLOGY

Study 1: RESCUR into Action – Students.

This study presents the results of the implementation of the RESCUR into Action project. RIA aimed to promote the development of resilience-related competences in the classroom context, and in schools with migrant and/or refugee students, through the implementation of RESCUR. One hundred and twenty-three teachers and specialised staff received 25 hours of accredited training. From these, 64

teachers implemented RESCUR with 1692 children from 3 to 17 years old. This trial consisted of one full-year implementation group (FYIG) with 720 children and a waiting group (WG) with 429 children (53.2% males, 50.8% in primary school and 29% in pre-school education, 7% migrants/refugees, plus 5.3% with migrants/refugees' parents).

Participants were grouped according to teachers' availability, motivation and resources. Teachers who changed school or class or were not available to start the RESCUR implementation at the beginning of the school year were part of the WG and started the implementation after the intermediate assessment. Both groups had the same supervision sessions to discuss their activities, strategies used and to solve any difficulties they were facing within the implementation process. FYIG consisted of approximately 30 sessions, and WG had approximately 15 sessions.

Evaluation took place 3 times: at baseline (T1), intermediate (T2) which occurred after four months, and final assessment (T3) at the end of the scholastic year. The assessment protocol included the *Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire* (SDQ) teachers' version (Goodman, 2001). SDQ is a behavioural and emotional screening measure with 25 items divided into five dimensions with five items each, namely prosocial behaviour (e.g. "Considerate of other people's

feelings.”, $\alpha_s > .90$), peer relationship problems (e.g. “Rather solitary, tends to play alone.”, $\alpha_s = .61$), hyperactivity (e.g. “Restless, overactive, cannot stay still for long.”, $\alpha_s = .82$), conduct problems (e.g. “Often fights with other children or bullies them.”, $\alpha_s = .67$) and emotional symptoms (e.g. “Nervous or clingy in new situations, easily loses confidence.”, $\alpha_s = .73$). Responses were given on a three-point scale, ranging from 0 (Not true) to 2 (Certainly true). The items were summed up and each scale’s scores ranged from 5 to 15, with higher scores corresponding to greater strengths or difficulties, depending on the scale. Also, at the three assessment stages, teachers underwent supervision meetings in which implementation difficulties and opportunities were discussed in a group with the researchers. One of the researchers led the discussion whilst the other was taking notes. These group meetings involved educators, teachers from primary and elementary school and a school psychologist that took place in the three participating councils. The information retrieved was later analysed in order to identify the main themes shared by the participants.

Study 2: RESCUR into Action – Teachers.

Teaching has been found to be emotionally demanding, with levels of work-related stress, anxiety and depression higher

within education professions when compared to other occupational groups. Rather than focusing on managing stress, a more productive approach would be to focus on fostering resilience in order to prevent or overcome these problems (Day, Edwards, Griffiths & Gu, 2011). As stated by Turner and Braine (2016), teachers should have opportunities to gain knowledge on how to manage their emotional demands and accommodate their professional and personal needs, equipping them emotionally for their professional career (p. 5). This study explored teachers' resilience and emotional intelligence, as well as the relationships among them and the impact of a training programme developed for teachers and other educational professionals in Portuguese schools.

This study aimed to explore the relationship between sense of mastery, relatedness, emotional reactivity, self-awareness, and emotion regulation with self-awareness, self-motivation, empathy and group relations management. We also sought to examine the impact of the involvement of a group of education professionals doing the training course on the RESCUR curriculum, under the research project RESCUR into Action as well as previous RESCUR training courses. The training programme included a 3-hour module on teachers' resilience, where teachers were introduced to general theoretical information and were invited to participate in

activities recognising their resilience competences and how they may adopt strategies to improve their resilience.

Participants were asked to complete an online questionnaire on a confidential and voluntary basis, before and after the training. This included socio-demographic questions, the Portuguese version of the Resiliency Scales (ERA, Prince-Embury, 2006; Filipe & Simões, 2013) and the Emotional Competence Scale - Escala Veiga Branco Capacidades da Inteligência Emocional (EVBCIE) (Branco, 2010). ERA is a self-report questionnaire, providing three personal qualities shown to contribute to resilient functioning, namely sense of mastery (SM), sense of relatedness (SR) and emotional reactivity (ER) (Prince-Embury, 2006). The questionnaire has 64 items distributed into 3 subscales (SM, 20 items; SR, 24 items, ER, 20 items). Item scores ranged from 0 (never) to 4 (almost always). The scores of each item were summed to form total raw scores for each of the subscales (Filipe & Simões, 2013). Although primarily developed for adolescents, this scale was chosen due to its prior validation and availability in the Portuguese language.

The EVBCIE was built on Goleman's theoretical concept of emotional intelligence (2010). This scale, developed in Portugal by Veiga Branco (2010), assesses the emotional competence in teachers, and has been used on research

concerning different professionals. It consists of a set of 85 items divided into five subscales: self-awareness (20 items, score 20-140), managing emotions (18 items, score 18-126), motivation (21 items, score 21-147), empathy (12 items, score 12-84) and managing emotions in groups (14 items, 14-98). The items are scored on a Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 7 (always).

The pre-post-test and correlational design included participants (N = 212) from kindergarten (24.3%), primary school teachers (31.8%), 2nd, 3rd cycle and secondary level (19.6%) and other educational professionals (psychologists, special education teachers (23.6%), mostly females (92.6%), with an average of more than twenty years of professional experience ($M = 21.6$, $SD = 9.33\%$). Most participants held a 1st cycle degree (72.3%), and the remaining participants held a Master's degree, postgraduate degree or PhD (18.9%), or a Bachelor degree (6.8%). The pre-post study sample included only 27% of the participants (N = 58), since those who completed only one assessment were excluded from the analysis.

Study 3: RESCUR with pre-kindergarten children.

This study presents the results of the implementation of RESCUR with children under four years old in a Gymboree

Center, to determine its suitability with pre-kindergarten children. RESCUR was applied within the School Skills Program which targets children between the ages of 18 months and 4 years old who are not attending pre-kindergarten or kindergarten. Children attended this program three mornings a week, with psychomotor activities, plastic arts, music, yoga and relaxation and a focus on the development of social and emotional competences and pre-academic skills. Activities were conducted in small groups, allowing for more individual attention.

The implementation of RESCUR was conducted through weekly sessions of 30 minutes, with a total of 14 sessions between January and May 2018. The implementation included 6 children (4 boys), aged between 25 and 38 months old. Four RESCUR themes were addressed, namely: Developing Communication Skills, Establishing and Maintaining Healthy Relationships, Developing a Positive Mindset, and Developing Self-Determination. These themes were chosen according to their relevance to the group in question. Sessions followed the structure proposed in the pre-school manual but with the adaptations deemed necessary. Adaptations included a reduction in the duration of sessions, the repetition of themes in several sessions to consolidate concepts, the introduction of activities that explore Gymboree

equipment, the reduction of drawing activities and the careful selection of mindfulness activities (more concrete and sensorial).

In order to assess the effectiveness of the implementation, an evaluation scale was built based on the CBCL - The Child Behavior Checklist (Achenbach & Ruffle, 2000) and the RESCUR Checklists (Cefai, Miljević-Riđički, et al., 2015b). The scales were completed by the teachers and by the children's parents. Topics used to assess emotional and behavioural problems in children (2 and 3 years old) included anxiety/depression, avoidance and aggressive behaviour. From the RESCUR Checklists the items corresponding to the topics covered were used.

FINDINGS

Study 1.

Preliminary results showed significant differences between groups at the baseline level (T1) according to Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (teachers' version), $.021 < p < .001$ with the exception of the emotional symptoms subscale $t(1066) = -.73$, $p = .4665$. At T2 (FYIG \pm 15 RESCUR sessions; WG - No RESCUR sessions), results showed statistically significant differences ($ps < .001$) in all SDQ dimensions between groups, with FYIG having lower values in

difficulty scales than WG, as observed before. Regarding the analysis within the group, FYIG maintained its score on peer problems ($p > .05$), decreased in emotional symptoms ($M_{T1} = 1.52$, $SD_{T1} = 2.26$, $M_{T2} = 0.94$, $SD_{T2} = 1.68$, $t(632) = 7.95$, $p < .001$), conduct problems ($M_{T1} = 1.18$, $SD_{T1} = 1.82$, $M_{T2} = 0.93$, $SD_{T2} = 1.82$, $t(632) = 4.51$, $p < .001$) and hyperactivity ($M_{T1} = 3.43$, $SD_{T1} = 3.16$, $M_{T2} = 2.84$, $SD_{T2} = 2.87$, $t(631) = 6.35$, $p < .001$) and increased in prosocial behaviour ($M_{T1} = 7.24$, $SD_{T1} = 3.07$, $M_{T2} = 7.78$, $SD_{T2} = 2.90$, $t(632) = -5.26$, $p < .001$). In contrast, WG maintained scores, except for hyperactivity ($M_{T1} = 4.47$, $SD_{T1} = 3.45$, $M_{T2} = 4.21$, $SD_{T2} = 3.23$, $t(324) = 2.126$, $p = .035$) that reduced its score and peers' problems ($M_{T1} = 1.40$, $SD_{T1} = 1.72$, $M_{T2} = 1.64$, $SD_{T2} = 1.89$, $t(324) = -2.96$, $p = .003$), which got worse. At T3 (end of the school year), the comparison between the two groups showed no differences between groups ($p > .05$), except for the hyperactivity subscale where the FYIG ($M_{T3} = 2.84$, $SD_{T3} = 2.80$) still had lower scores than WG ($M_{T3} = 3.33$, $SD_{T3} = 3.25$, $t(458.82) = -2.17$, $p = .030$), although its mean value dropped from the intermediate to final assessment ($M_{T2} = 4.29$, $SD_{T2} = 3.23$; $M_{T3} = 3.56$, $SD_{T3} = 3.40$, $t(226) = 4.89$, $p < .001$). The results showed that at the final assessment, both groups were similar in terms of strengths and difficulties as perceived by teachers.

The qualitative assessment was performed after about 15 RESCUR sessions with the FYIG. Results showed that teachers perceived a decrease in disruptive behaviour and an increase in prosocial behaviour, such as helping, protecting, sharing, and listening to one another. Most of the teachers, regardless of the school year, noted that children showed greater autonomy and competence to solve problems and that many children could identify when the class needed to calm down. At the end of the school year (T3), data from supervision showed that, overall, teachers were satisfied with the RESCUR implementation. However, it was widely agreed that more time was needed for an effective behaviour modification with each child. Most teachers reported that children were more aware about their behaviour as well as the consequences of their actions, and this included older children (12-17 years old). Some teachers also reported that there was no longer the need for conflict management moments with the teacher's intervention, since children were frequently able to solve conflicts by themselves. Class discussions were also more productive, since children were more able to think in alternative ways and some teachers also felt that the children's social and emotional vocabulary was enriched due to the RESCUR programme.

Study 2.

The results showed strong correlations between sense of mastery (SM) and managing emotions $r(58)=.49, p < .000$; self-motivation $r(58)=.60, p < .000$; empathy $r(58)=.65, p < .000$, managing emotions in group $r(58)=.44, p < .001$; and emotional intelligence total score $r(54)=.64, p < .000$. Strong correlations were also found among sense of relatedness (SR) and managing emotions $r(54)=.44, p < .001$; self-motivation $r(54)=.52, p < .000$; empathy $r(54)=.49, p < .000$; managing emotions in a group $r(54)=.53, p < .000$ and emotional intelligence total score $r(54)=.55, p < .000$. Finally emotional reactivity (ER) was negatively correlated with managing emotions $r(55)=-.29, p < .05$; self-motivation $r(57)=-.32, p < .05$; and emotional intelligence total score $r(54)=-.32, p < .05$. Considering the scores obtained ($N=58$) before (I) and after the training (F), high values were observed in resilience competences, namely in sense of mastery (SM), (I, $M = 55.4, SD = 11.4$; F, $M = 58.2, SD = 7.1$); sense of relatedness (SR) (I, $M = 68.0, SD = 14.4$; F, $M = 72.7, SD = 8.5$) and a low score on emotional reactivity (ER) (I, $M = 23.0, SD = 10.8$, F, $M = 22.1, SD = 10.9$). No statistically significant differences were observed from pre to post assessment in sense of mastery SM, $t(114)=-1.52, p < .131$; sense of relatedness SR $t(108)=-1.82, p < .72$ and emotional reactivity ER $t(113)=.636, p < .53$. With

regards to emotional intelligence competences assessed by EVBCIE, the raw scores also showed high values both times in the five domains, with some slight improvements on the average scores from pre to post assessment, though not statistically significant, respectively on self-awareness (I, $M = 82.3$, $SD = 10.5$; F, $M = 79.2$, $SD = 10.4$), $t(114)=1.58$, $p < .115$; managing emotions (I, $M = 85.9$, $SD = 10.1$; F, $M = 86.1$, $SD = 11.0$), $t(114)=-.097$, $p < .097$; self-motivation (I, $M = 105.1$, $SD = 12.4$; F, $M = 106.9$, $SD = 14.7$), $t(114)=-.704$, $p < .483$; empathy (I, $M = 56.8$, $SD = 10.2$; F, $M = 59.2$, $SD = 8.9$), $t(114)=-1.371$, $p < .173$; managing emotions in group (I, $M = 62.3$, $SD = 11.9$; F, $M = 64.$, $SD = 8.5$), $t(114)=-1.149$, $p < .253$ and emotional intelligence total score (I, $M = 393.0$, $SD = 36.7$; F, $M = 385.6$, $SD = 34.8$), $t(108)=-.371$, $p < .711$).

Study 3.

In general, both children and parents seemed engaged with the RESCUR activities, showing motivation and curiosity to participate in all the fourteen sessions and continuing to work at home. In most of the items of the RESCUR Checklists (Cefai, Miljević-Riđički et al., 2015b), both parents and teachers observed some improvements, particularly those related to the understanding of emotions in communication, expression of feelings and needs, and sharing, cooperation and

teamwork. Teachers also noted improvements in effective listening. However, when analysing parents' and teachers' responses on the checklists, there were no statistically significant differences for any of the ten items: Effective listening $z=-1.633$, $p=.102$; Understanding the emotions in communication $z=-1.414$, $p=.157$; Express feelings and needs $z=-1.414$, $p=.157$; Share, cooperate and work as a team $z=-1.414$, $p=.157$; Distinguish between positive and negative thinking $z=-1.414$, $p=.157$; Think positive $z=.000$, $p=1.000$; Challenge Negative Thoughts $z=-1.342$, $p=.180$; Use hope and humor to feel better $z=.000$, $p=1.000$; Thinking about solutions to a problem $z=-.816$, $p=.414$; Define the problem and think about creative solutions $z=-.743$, $p=.458$. Items that showed the least improvements were those related to challenging negative thoughts and problem-solving, and thinking about creative solutions to a problem. In some cases, these items were not even mentioned by parents, but were always mentioned by the teachers.

When comparing the RESCUR Checklists (Cefai, Miljević-Ridički et al., 2015b) results with the behavioural profile of the participating children, the children with the greatest improvements (ten items both for parents and teachers) also presented very low results in anxiety, avoidance and aggressive behaviour, through the adapted items of CBCL

(Achenbach & Ruffle, 2000). On the other hand, the children with the least improvements (5 items for parents and 6 for teachers) had high levels of aggression and avoidance (compared to other children) but reduced levels of anxiety.

In most cases, the values of each behavioural dimension were relatively low (either in parents' or teachers' perception). For example, the anxiety dimension reached the maximum value of 8, when this scale had 11 items and therefore could reach the value of 33 at most. In the case of four out of the six children, the parents reported higher levels of anxiety and aggressive behaviour amongst their children, when compared to the teacher's answers at post intervention. In all dimensions there were very different values for some of the children between the parents' and the teachers' perceptions, although there were no significant differences in any of the behaviour traits analysed: anxiety ($M_p = 4,33$, $SD_p = 2,50$, $M_t = 3,17$, $SD_t = 2,56$), aggressive behavior ($M_p = 7,50$, $SD_p = 4,42$, $M_t = 5,50$, $SD_t = 6,12$) and avoidance ($M_p = 3,00$, $SD_p = 2,45$, $M_t = 2,50$, $SD_t = 1,38$)

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results presented in this chapter indicate that RESCUR appears to be a useful tool in the social and emotional development of young children, particularly in view of the

importance of social and emotional competences in pre and school years. By providing children and young people with key tools to overcome life challenges and adversities, RESCUR can be an important resource that schools can adopt to help their communities to flourish. RESCUR constitutes a universal curriculum, implemented by teachers who already accompany the children on a daily basis, and are thus able to be more attentive to the specific needs of each group (Fenwick-Smith et al., 2018). Additionally, parents' involvement and participation in the process seems to be a facilitator for the positive results found (Brooks, 2005; Cowen et al., 1996). However, the results observed must be analysed with caution once significant differences were observed at baseline between groups. Moreover, RESCUR is targeted at children from 4 to 12 years old and in this implementation one older group (13-17 years old) was included. Additionally, it is also important to mention that the majority of the older group participants were in a more vulnerable situation, being supported by special curricula as a result of their learning disabilities and/or retention history. Even though teachers reported great changes in these children, their data may have influenced the results obtained and they would probably need more time of intervention.

With regards to teachers' resilience and emotional intelligence competencies, the main findings highlight the

relation between emotional intelligence and resilience, thus such association may be an avenue for future research in order for teachers' training to be improved with more collaboration from researchers in both fields. The conclusions from this study are in conformity with a study that examined the significant relationship between emotional intelligence and autonomy, competence and relatedness as dimensions of basic psychological needs, although in this case the relation with empathy was not observed (Spehranazar et al., 2017). Relevant in our research was the fact that high resilience and emotional competencies scores were found amongst the educational professionals involved, in contrast with previous research (Beltman, Mansfield & Price, 2011; Day & Hong, 2016). When observing the impact of the training, results demonstrated no significant improvement in resilience and emotional intelligence competencies. However, there is an increasing recognition that the nature of teaching requires resilience, which is an important factor in teacher effectiveness and also that teachers' resilience can in fact be developed (Day & Gu, 2014), not only in order to better face times of adversity but also in everyday ordinary, or difficult school and classroom events (Masten, 2001). Our results show us the need to better identify how to improve teachers' resilience. Nevertheless, since the resilience training for teachers was a short component

of the RESCUR training and the time that mediated pre and post evaluation was also short, future research may look into more effective approaches in the RESCUR training programme in order to promote education professionals' resilience and emotional intelligence. Previous research shows the promising value of structured teachers' resilience training, particularly for those who are in the early years of their career (Mansfield, Beltman, Broadley & Weatherby-Fell, 2016). In fact, increasing the resilience of teachers must be considered both a moral and a strategic concern since it has impact on teacher recruitment and retention, on training and continuing professional development (Day, 2018), as well as on supporting students' social and emotional learning and well-being (Cefai & Cavioni, 2016).

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RESILIENCE AND PROSOCIAL BEHAVIOUR IN ITALIAN SCHOOLS

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INTRODUCTION

Resilience is a multi-componential construct in which cognitive, emotional, biological, family-related and social factors converge. It may be defined as the successful adaptation in the face of adversity and environmental stressors (Masten, 1994). High levels of resilience are essential for the social and emotional development of children, as well as for their health and ethical development, to increase their motivation and to improve their academic achievement (Elias, Zins, Weissberg, et al., 1997). Schools are the ideal place for all children to build social and emotional learning and resilience, and this is especially important in the case of vulnerable children (Goleman, 1995). The EU Council's "Strategic Framework for European Cooperation in Education and Training for 2020" (European Commission, 2009) underlines the need for quality education and support for vulnerable groups since these children may be at risk of dropping out of school, absenteeism, school failure, social exclusion and mental health problems.

The development of a resilience curriculum for primary education in Europe was an effort to address the difficulties experienced by marginalized children by focusing on their strengths and developing their psychological resources (Cefai et al., 2014). RESCUR Surfing the Waves is a curriculum developed in a European research collaboration within a Comenius project (2012-2015) between 6 European universities in different countries (Malta, Italy, Greece, Croatia, Portugal and Sweden). The aim of the project was to promote the academic, emotional and social learning of students at risk of early school leaving, school failure, absenteeism, social exclusion and mental health problems. The curriculum makes it possible for children to develop key competencies to overcome disadvantageous situations and obstacles by enhancing their skills and strengths (Cavioni, Lupica Spagnolo, Beddia & Zanetti, 2015).

The programme was designed using an inclusive perspective and included activities for at-risk children (such as ethnic minorities or refugees), and to foster the integration of children with special educational needs and gifted children, with the aim of addressing their specific educational needs, helping them to cope with difficult situations and strengthen their psychological resources to facilitate their growth process (Zanetti, Carelli, Cavioni & Lizzori, 2017). Furthermore, the

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programme included the involvement of parents, who were constantly informed about the activities carried out at school, and it also included materials and activities to promote the development of resilience within the family context.

The present chapter aims to investigate the impact of the RESCUR Surfing the Waves programme on the promotion of resilience and prosocial behaviour in primary school children in Italy. A significant increase in the variables related to resilience and prosocial behaviour was expected, both in the self-assessment and according to the opinion of teachers and parents.

METHODOLOGY

The study explored the trend of two groups (experimental and control groups) in two stages (pre and post intervention training) and measured behavioural problems and prosocial behaviours and resilience. Before the commencement of the training activities in class, two training sessions were held for the teachers of the experimental group. These sessions focused on the importance of developing resilience as a key competence for the learning and wellbeing of students. Moreover, they focused on the role of teachers and parents in building a positive class climate and a cohesive school community.

Teacher training was a central element for the experimental classes since this enabled the teachers to introduce the resilience programme activities as part of the curriculum. The researchers and experimenters were in constant contact to provide support and allow for adaptations of the activities proposed, according to the different needs of the students. Furthermore, researchers noted that a lack of positive attitude, basic knowledge, or adequate skills on the part of the teachers could invalidate the quality of the project implementation and result in poor results (Askell-Williams & Lawson, 2013; Wigelsworth, Humphrey & Lendrum, 2013).

The programme was implemented with 5 experimental classes in 2 hour meetings every week, with a total of 10 sessions. Each training session included the presence of both the experimenters and teachers in the classroom, and both of these had an active role in managing the activities. All the materials produced at school and at home were collected by each student in a "Portfolio" so that everyone could have complete documentation of the activities performed, for their own records and to be shown to the parents. The topics covered within the various activities were the same for each class and touched on all the themes proposed by the RESCUR programme, namely communication, relationships, positive mindset, self-determination, identifying and building on one's

strengths and turning challenges into opportunities.

To measure the effectiveness of the programme, the following instruments were used:

Child and Youth Resilience Measure Child Version (Liebenberg, Ungar & Van de Vijver, 2012): this is a specific questionnaire on resilience, suitable for primary and secondary school children. This questionnaire completed by each child as a self-assessment, is made up of 26 items. It consists of three subscales investigating the three levels on which the protection factors that favour the development of resilience operate: individual skills and resources, relations with the primary caregivers and cultural factors facilitating a sense of belonging. The questionnaire aims to assess any improvement in resilience due to the training. In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha of the three components was 0.71.

The Person Most Knowledgeable (PMK) version of CYRM represents the version completed by the parents of the students involved, mirroring the one completed in the classroom. The version of the questionnaire used in this study was the Canadian standardisation by Liebenberg et al (2012); there is no Italian standardisation of the questionnaire.

Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) (Goodman, 1997): this is a questionnaire that evaluates the psychological adjustment of children aged between 4 and 16 years. It focuses

on the child's socio-emotional profile, behaviour in various contexts, especially in relation to peers, and prosocial behaviour. The instrument was completed by the teachers and parents of each child participating in the study. In the original version of the instrument, high levels of internal consistency of the scales were found with a Cronbach's Alpha score ranging from 0.70 to 0.80 (Goodman, 1997; 2001). In the present study, the Cronbach's Alpha is 0.72.

The present study consists of a pre and post research design, three months apart, conducted with two groups (experimental and control groups). The sample consisted of 154 Italian students aged between 7 to 11 years, with an average age of 98.1 months in the pre-test phase (ds. 11.5), and attending primary school (51.3% male; 48.7% female). A total of 9 classes were involved, divided into experimental (5 classes) and control (4 classes), with the overall participation of 8 teachers. Although it was not possible to randomly assign the single subjects to the two groups as they formed part of pre-existing classes, the different classrooms were randomly assigned to the two conditions. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics divided by group and gender.

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Table 1. *Description of the Student Sample*

Experimental Group (n=86)			Control Group (=68)		
Boys	Girls	Total	Boys	Girls	Total
N=47	N=39	N=86	N=32	N=36	N=68
54.7%	45.3%	100%	47.1%	52.9%	100%

Each student in the sample was monitored before and after the training through a self-administered questionnaire and a questionnaire completed by teachers and parents related to the behaviour observed in the student under consideration. The experimental group took part in ten resilience activities of 2 hours each, totaling 20 hours of training.

FINDINGS

The preliminary analysis to assess any differences between the two groups in the pre-test phase was performed through a series of independent sample t-tests for all the variables considered in the study; no significant differences were found. Data analysis to verify the impact of the programme was performed by analysing the ANOVA variance for repeated measurements with a 2x2 research design to verify the effectiveness of the

training, $p < 0.05$ (Field, 2009; Pallant, 2007). Statistical analysis was performed using the software Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), Version 18 (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2001). This analysis focused on time comparisons (pre and post training) to monitor the trend of the average scores of the variables concerned. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and the results of the independent sample t-test and the description of all the variables considered pre and post training.

CYRM: Resilience increased significantly according to the experimental students' perception. A comparison of the scores obtained in the pre-test with those obtained in the post-test in the General Resilience Level variable (Figure 1) revealed a significant main effect $F(1.142) = 12.315$; $p = 0.001$, $\eta = 0.8$. The interaction effect between the pre-test and post-test scores $F(1.142) = 21.484$ is also significant; $p = 0.000$, $\eta = 0.131$. These results suggest that the means of the experimental group increased significantly compared to the means of the control group in the two times analysed.

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Table 2. Results of the Independent Sample T-Test Between the Groups on the Three Measures

Instruments ^[1]	Variables	Experimental Group (n°86)		Control Group (n°68)	
		PRE	POST	PRE	POST
CYRM	TOT	41.28 (5.612)	45.89 (4.560)	42.69 (5.433)	42.20 (9.267)
CYRM-PMK	TOT	43.23 (4.371)	46.9 (2.785)	45.31 (3.672)	44.71 (4.074)
SDQ-I	PRO	7.00 (2.646)	8.51 (1.556)	7.45 (2.389)	8.33 (1.952)
SDQ-G	PRO	8.38 (1.548)	9.40 (.775)	8.32 (1.407)	7.97 (1.947)

[1] CYRM = The Child and Youth Resilience Measure; CYRM-PMK: The Person Most Knowledgeable (PMK) version of CYRM for parents; TOT = general level of resilience. SDQ-I = Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire, teacher evaluation; SDQ-G = Strength and Difficulties Questionnaire, parents' evaluation; PRO = Prosocial behavior * $p < .05$; $p < .01$

CYRM-PMK: Resilience in the experimental groups increased significantly according to the parents' perception. When comparing the scores obtained in the pre-test and post-test in the General Resilience Level variable, a significant main effect was found, $F(1,124) = 22.896$; $p = 0.000$, $\eta = .156$ and a

significant interaction effect was also noted, $F(1.124) = 45.415$; $p = 0.000$, $\eta = .268$. The scores obtained by the experimental group increased significantly in the post-test compared to those of the control group (Figure 2).

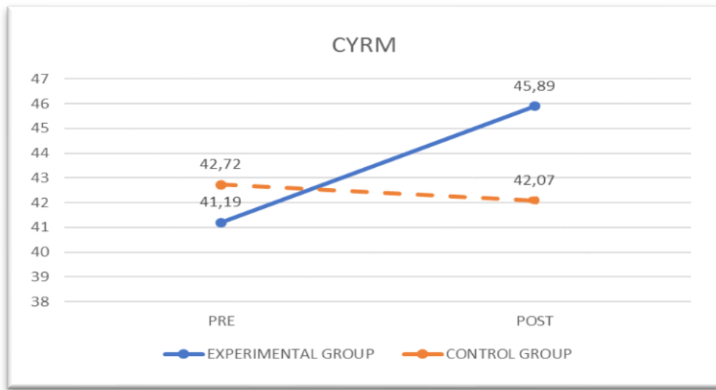


Figure 1. CYRM Means of the Two Groups

SDQ-I: Prosocial behaviour increased significantly according to the teachers' evaluation, showing a significant main effect $F(1.145) = 47.523$; $p < .001$, $\eta = 0.247$. The interaction effect between the pre-test and post-test scores $F(1.145) = 4.100$ was also significant; $p = .045$, $\eta = 0.027$. These results suggest that the means of the experimental group increased significantly compared to that of the control group (Figure 3).

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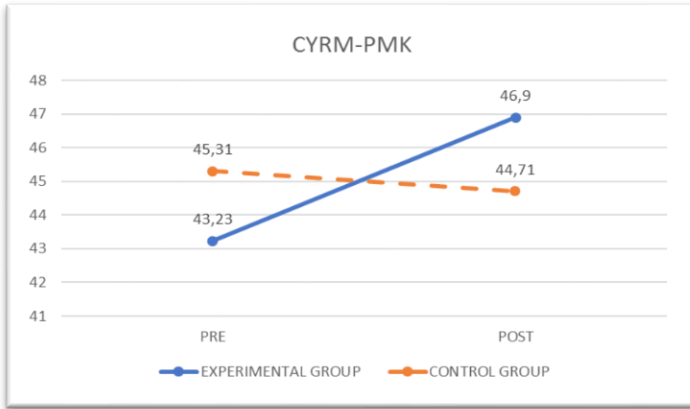


Figure 2. CYRM-PMK Means of the Two Groups

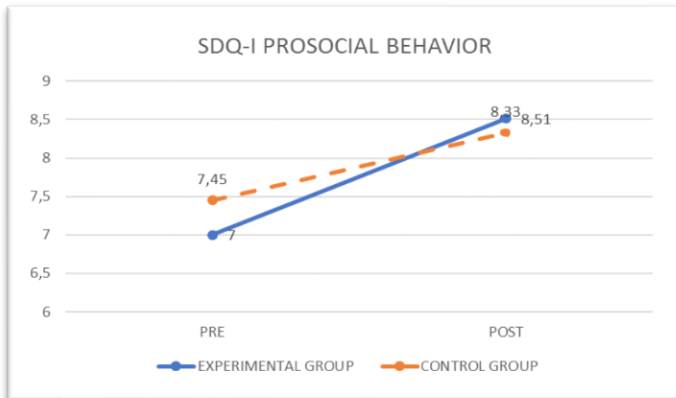


Figure 3. SDQ-I Means of the Two Groups

SDQ-G: Prosocial behaviour increased significantly according to the parents' evaluation, showing a significant main effect (Figure 3) $F(1,125) = 4,132$; $p = 0.044$, $\eta^2 = .032$. The interaction effect was also significant, $F(1,125) = 20.300$; $p = 0.000$, $\eta^2 = .140$, with the means of the experimental group increasing significantly compared to that of the control group in the two times considered (Figure 4).

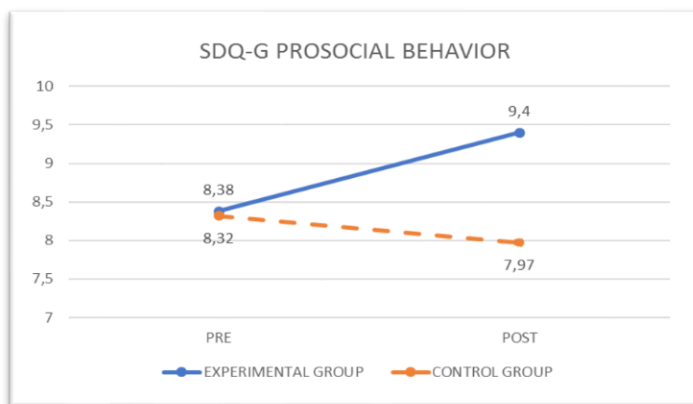


Figure 4. SDQ-G means of the Two Groups

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the RESCUR Surfing the Waves programme was effective in increasing the level of

resilience and improving the prosocial skills of primary school children. Specifically, the general increase in resilience was also demonstrated with the variables related to individual skills and resources, relationships with the main caregivers and cultural factors that facilitate the sense of belonging.

The multi-componential nature of the construct of resilience requires it to be measured using a series of different aspects that concern both the individual and also the context in which s/he lives and the relationships s/he has. Thus, the Total Resilience score includes a series of culturally and contextually specific aspects (Ungar, Brown, Liebenberg, Cheung & Levine, 2008). The reason for this choice is twofold. First, children and young people are faced with contextually specific risks linked to their exposure to acute and chronic stress factors. Secondly, the way in which risks are managed individually, within families or within communities, is influenced by cultural resources and contextual aspects (Liebenberg, et al., 2012).

It should be noted that resilience is not a stable trait, but rather it is possible to develop resilience in school children through set activities. In fact, the results of this programme show how the experimental group experienced a significant increase in their level of resilience compared to the control group according both to the students the parents. On the other hand, the students and parents in the control group did not

notice any significant improvement in the period observed; on the contrary, the analysis showed that there was a slight decrease of resilience over time.

The results also show a significant increase in prosocial behaviour of students in the experimental group when compared to that of the control group according to both teachers' and parents' evaluations. The programme activities carried out in the classroom included a focus on empathy, care, solidarity, collaboration, acceptance and celebration of diversity which allowed the experimental group to significantly increase its prosocial score in the post-test compared to the control group. According to Salafi and Monteduro (2003), prosocial competence comprises of seven components; evaluation of the other in a positive perspective, communication, empathy, assertiveness and resolution of aggression, self-control, resolution of problems and creativity, help sharing and collaboration. These are consistent with the topics addressed in the activities of the RECUR curriculum. In fact, the results of this study show that the students who participated in these activities and worked together with their parents on tasks related to socio-emotional learning and resilience, experienced an increase in their resilience and prosocial behaviour, according to both the parents' and the teachers' evaluations.

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The duration of the three-month training programme could be a limitation of the study as multiple studies have emphasised the need to implement long-term socio-emotional learning and resilience programmes systematically by integrating these into traditional teaching programmes (Stefan & Miclea, 2010). Future research will focus on extending the project over a longer period of time as well as integrating RESCUR activities more closely into the teachers' usual planning. Furthermore, it would be advisable to involve parents more closely, by providing initial training on the constructs of resilience and prosocial behaviour and by giving them more tools to follow the activities in the best way possible at home. Specific activities could also be added to strengthen parental resilience (Knopf & Swick, 2007) since it has been found that training which focuses on strengthening the socio-emotional competence and resilience of parental figures is related to the lowering of problematic behaviour in children (Webster-Stratton, Reid and Hammond, 2004).

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**ASSESSMENT AND PROMOTION OF SOCIAL,
EMOTIONAL AND HEALTH SKILLS IN EUROPEAN
SCHOOLS: THE *LEARNING TO BE* PROJECT**
ELISABETTA CONTE, VALERIA CAVIONI,
ILARIA GRAZZANI, VERONICA ORNAGHI
AND ALESSIA AGLIATI

INTRODUCTION

The school, as an educational system, is increasingly asked to teach students social and emotional skills that may facilitate their social success and well-being, and teachers are also expected to evaluate these competencies. Both of these goals (teaching and assessment) are mentioned in the Recommendation of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union of 18 December 2006 on key competencies for lifelong learning (European Union, 2006), and reiterated in 2018 in the New Recommendations (European Union, 2018). Although school principals and teachers are aware of these new tasks, in many instances they are not provided with appropriate methods to assess the achievement of these non-cognitive skills. Indeed, students have traditionally been assessed at school only for their knowledge and academic performance.

The *Learning to Be* project, an Erasmus+ Key Action 3 project co-funded by the European Commission in 2017, aims to address this issue by developing and testing a set of tools and methods that would

help teachers, as well as their students, recognise and assess social, emotional, and health-related skills. Since *Learning to Be* is a Key Action 3 project, it consists of a policy experimentation that aims to evaluate the effectiveness and scalability of innovative policy measures through large scale field trials based on robust methodologies. The collected evidence is then used to facilitate the transnational transferability of the innovative measures (European Commission, 2017).

Learning to Be includes seven European countries: Lithuania, the leading project partner, Latvia, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, and Finland. Overall, more than 40 experts (academics, researchers, trainers, teachers, etc.) from the seven states have been directly involved from the first steps of the project.

Social and Emotional Learning.

The term social and emotional learning (SEL) was introduced in the 1990s to define a number of initiatives aimed at reducing risk factors and improving children's well-being and positive adjustment (Guerra & Bradshaw, 2008). Along the years, the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has become a reference point for identifying effective evidence-based SEL programmes from preschool to secondary school. Zins and Elias (2007) defined SEL as “the process of acquiring and effectively applying the knowledge, attitudes, and skills necessary to recognize and manage emotions;

developing care and concern for others; making responsible decisions; establishing positive relationships; and handling challenging situations capably” (p. 234). Hence, five key components of SEL can be identified, namely self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making skills (CASEL, 2015).

The acquisition and mastery of social and emotional skills have positive effects on children’s well-being and success in school and life in general (Dray et al., 2017; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011; Harlacher & Merrell, 2010). For instance, the review of school-based social, emotional, and behavioural interventions carried out by Sklad, Diekstra, De Ritter, Ben and Gravesteyn (2012) demonstrated that children who attended SEL programmes showed greater social abilities, positive self-image, school achievements, and prosocial behaviour. On the other hand, mental health problems, antisocial behaviour, and substance abuse decreased.

Because of the importance of SEL programmes and interventions for children’s success in life, schools can provide a special context for promoting these skills on a large scale. Furthermore, an assessment of the development of these skills is needed in order to evaluate the changes over time. This demonstrates the key role played by teachers as implementers of SEL programmes (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011).

Formative Assessment.

Teachers commonly elicit evidence of students' learning through tests and grades in order to measure their achievements. However, social and emotional skills can be better assessed through formative assessment rather than summative assessment. Indeed, SEL is a complex process that cannot be assessed in traditional ways (Marzano, 2015).

Formative assessment includes a variety of strategies and activities that gather evidence of the student's learning process and provide the opportunity to improve both teaching and learning (Black & Wiliam, 1998). What makes this evaluation approach formative is how the information collected is used for monitoring learning, giving students feedback, and making the appropriate adjustments in methods of teaching in order to move forward and achieve learning goals (Greenstein, 2016; Shepard, 2005). Hence, formative assessment provides both students and teachers with a measure of progress.

According to Wiliam (2011), the learner, teacher, and peers are the three main characters involved in the learning and teaching process. Finding out where the learners are in their learning, where they are going, and how to get there, is the target of formative assessment. Wiliam identified five strategies that guide formative assessment: clarifying, sharing, and understanding learning intentions and criteria for success; eliciting evidence of student learning; providing feedback that moves learning forward; activating learners

as instructional resources for one another; and activating learners as the owners of their own learning. Although a long tradition of research has focused on applying formative assessment to curricular subjects, its use to evaluate students' SEL is quite new.

METHODOLOGY

The *Learning to Be* project consists of three phases: pre-test, intervention, and post-test. A quasi-experimental research design was adopted and compared differences between the pre- and post-test across the experimental and control groups. The experimental group took part in the training and the implementation right after the pre-test, whereas the control group was asked to postpone it after the post-test. The pre-test involved all participants and took place at the beginning of the scholastic year. This was followed by the training of teachers in the experimental group, who had approximately five months to implement what they learned whilst being monitored by school supervisors. Teachers belonging to the control group did not receive any kind of training and went ahead with their daily practice. The post-test for both experimental and control groups took place at the end of the school year.

Participants.

Overall, 7181 students (3414 females) and 1098 teachers (919 females) from selected schools in Lithuania, Italy, Latvia, Spain, and

Slovenia took part in the intervention. Students were 8 to 11 years old attending Grade 4, and 12 to 15 years old attending Grade 8. Teachers worked at primary (Grade 4) and lower secondary (Grade 8) schools, and were subject (49.55%), class (38.45%), and special needs teachers (2.8%) or had other roles in the classes (9.45%).

Participants were assigned to the experimental group ($N = 3961$ students; $N = 700$ teachers) and control group ($N = 3220$ students; $N = 398$ teachers). Schools under the same Principal were assigned to the same condition to avoid contamination of the data during the implementation phase. Principals signed an agreement stating their official involvement in the project, then parental written informed consent was obtained for all students.

Instruments.

Before and after the intervention phase, students and teachers were asked to complete a set of online questionnaires. In cases where the school did not have computer classrooms or Internet connection was poor, paper versions of the questionnaires were used.

Students completed the following questionnaires: The *Schoolwork Engagement Inventory* (EDA; Salmela-Aro & Upadyaya, 2012) and the *School Burnout Inventory* (SBI; Salmela-Aro, Kiuru, Leskinen, & Nurmi, 2009) to measure school engagement and motivation; the *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children 2013-2014* (HBSC; WHO, 2016) to investigate bullying, well-being, and

substance abuse; the *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* (Rosenberg, 1965) to measure perceived self-esteem; the *Social and Emotional Competence Questionnaire* (SECQ; Zhou & Ee, 2012) to measure social and emotional competencies. Social-demographic information including age, gender, country of birth and economic background was also included.

Teachers were asked to complete the following questionnaires: The *Teacher Epistemologies* (Vedenpää & Lonka, 2014) to evaluate their epistemic beliefs; the *Utrecht Work Engagement Scale* (UWES-S; Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzáles-Romá, & Bakker, 2002) to investigate motivation, work engagement, and burnout; the *Health Behaviour in School-aged Children 2013-2014* (HBSC; WHO, 2016) to measure health, well-being, and satisfaction with life; the *Lions Quest Questionnaire* (Talvio, Berg, Litmanen, & Lonka, 2016) to measure teachers' readiness to implement SEL at school. Background information including age, gender, role at school and years of teaching was also collected.

The Intervention Procedure.

The intervention made use of a Toolkit, that is a manual developed by the *Learning to Be* project partners. The main topics of the Toolkit included a definition of SEL and its benefits, as well as how to promote it at school; description of formative assessment strategies; proposals of teaching methods; and a set of assessment tools that every

teacher can embed and make use of in their work with students, regardless of the subject they teach. The efficacy of the Toolkit was tested through its implementation in Lithuania, Latvia, Italy, Slovenia, and Spain during the scholastic year 2018-2019. Teachers of the experimental group attended 25 hours of training conducted by expert trainers, specifically 16 hours of theoretical training and 9 hours of monitoring carried out as workshop activities. The purpose of the training was to make SEL visible, clarify how to promote SEL within a whole school approach, and present a set of tools and methods that teachers could integrate into their educational practices to assess and develop one's own and students' social, emotional, and health-related skills.

EXPECTED FINDINGS

Teachers' participation in the training and the consequent change in their educational practices is expected to have an impact at different levels. In fact, students and teachers in the experimental group are expected to outperform the control group during the post-test with regards to personal and social development. With regards to students, the intervention is hypothesised to have a positive impact on their social and emotional competencies. Moreover, school engagement, motivation, and positive attitudes towards self, others and the school in general, should increase (cf. Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2010; Taylor, Oberle, Durlak, & Weissberg, 2017). On the contrary, the

frequency of bullying and substance consumption should decrease in the experimental group.

With regards to teachers, the intervention is firstly expected to have a positive impact on their social and emotional competencies. Since the topics of training concerned SEL, we expect that teachers will develop greater self-awareness and skills of self-regulation, social awareness and positive relationships, as well as responsible decision-making. Secondly, after the intervention teachers are hypothesised to be more engaged at work, satisfied with life and motivated due to a change of attitudes and perceptions towards school. Psychological and physical well-being and health should improve as well, resulting in a decreased risk of burnout (cf. Hwang, Bartlett, Greben, & Hand, 2017; Spilt, Koomen, & Thijs, 2011). Finally, teachers' readiness to implement SEL at school is expected to increase.

CONCLUSION

The main purpose of *Learning to Be* is to test the efficacy of the Toolkit by comparing pre- and post-test results of the experimental and control group. The project is still ongoing and data collection will finish in the near future. Although statistical analyses on the effects of the intervention are not yet available, some of the teachers in the experimental group reported important changes in their classes during monitoring visits. For instance, they described having modified their attitudes towards some students, with positive effects on the teacher-

student relationship. Other teachers reported a more peaceful class environment, where students are more focused, curious, and attentive. Enhanced collaboration with colleagues as a consequence of the intervention has also been observed. Indeed, teachers had the opportunity to share opinions, views, and suggestions about activities and strategies with colleagues during their training.

Since Learning to Be is an Erasmus+ Key Action 3 project, the main purpose is to support policy reforms. In the case that the results of this intervention were to be statistically significant in the expected direction, the SEL assessment and development practices may be embedded into the curricula of the European educational systems. Children and young people in the current society face many challenges that undermine their learning and well-being (Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni, & Downes, 2018). Thus, they need to be equipped with appropriate cognitive and social and emotional skills that can be efficiently developed at school. Students, teachers, parents, and other stakeholders should all be actively involved in this process.

Despite a growing consensus on the priority of supporting SEL initiatives at school (Cefai et al, 2018), Europe is still late in this process compared to other places around the world. For instance, the USA under the guidance of CASEL is carrying out many interventions and programmes with the aim of integrating SEL into curricula across the US. Because of the potential benefits for the whole society,

European education policies should invest more resources into promoting and implementing SEL at school.

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BUILDING RESILIENCE SKILLS THROUGH JOURNAL WRITING AND DRAWING

MARIA PACE

INTRODUCTION

Johnson (2008) defines resilience both a process and outcome of coping in response to risk, adversity, or threats to wellbeing. Resilience is defined as the process of, capacity for, or outcome of successful adaptation despite challenging or threatening circumstances (Poulou, 2007). Masten (2011) defines resilience as “the capacity of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from significant challenges that threaten its stability, viability or development” (p.494). Resilient children possess characteristics that elicit positive attitudes from people, given position attention from others, perceive their experiences constructively and adopt a positive perspective to life (Poulou, 2007). These children are also able to understand what has happened to them (insight), what happens to others (empathy), experience a high quality of life (achievement), have a sense of self-esteem and confidence, social problem-solving skills and a sense of self-efficacy (Dent & Cameron, as cited in Poulou, 2007).

Nash et al. (2016) argue that relationships in schools play an important part in teachers’ ability and willingness to

collaborate within a school setting and that resilience is a relational process. This chapter presents research held in a nurture group in a state school in Malta with two nurture group educators (a teacher and an LSE) as well as diary entries by four children aged between 8 and 11 years old. When writing about teachers who participated in her study, Syrnyk (2012) identified a number of qualities and characteristics that nurture group educators tend to exhibit. These include inner strength, calmness, empathetic nature, self-awareness, objectivity, and the ability to maintain a relaxed and reasoned demeanour, to attune to the internal states of others, and to be effective managers of their own states.

There is a need for schools to listen to the voices of the children/young people who are part of the school community. An inclusive school is one that cares for and promotes the well-being of all children, thus, enabling educators to develop skills and gain meaningful insights into children's challenges (Kourkourtas, Eleftherakis, Vitalaki & Hart, 2015). Schools need to support students with social and emotional competencies and skills to achieve healthy relationships, personal growth and adaptability, not only in the face of obstacles but also in everyday life (Poulou, 2007). Educators need to facilitate the inclusion of all students and meet their holistic needs (De Leeuw, De Boer, Bijstra & Minnaert, 2017).

Nash, Schlosser and Scarr (2016) suggest that supporting children and young people in school will only be successful when schools have understood challenging behaviour is an expression of need. Mowat (2010) maintains that behaviour is “a social construct, embedded within culture, and what might be construed by one individual as unacceptable behaviour might be construed by another as perfectly acceptable; and behaviour which might be acceptable in one context might not be acceptable within another” (p.203).

Armstrong (2014) defines SEBD “the study of the behaviour of young people and children which causes adults concern” (p. 734). Syrnyk (2014) puts forward the following questions: “What do we know of the younger pupil’s voice, particularly of those who are experiencing the nurture approach?” and “How can we effectively hear the voice of these young children?” Flynn (2014) deems that by listening to the pupils’ expert insights on their own experiences, teachers and researchers may be in a better position to provide appropriate pedagogical and social awareness of the learning experiences of children with SEBD. With regard to pupil voice, Billington (2006) articulates five questions that critically evaluate educators’ and researchers’ work with children: ‘How do we speak of children?; How do we speak with children?; How do we write of children? & How do we listen to children?’.

The research question being asked in this chapter is: In what ways, if any, can educators enhance resilient skills in children through journal writing and drawing?

METHODOLOGY

Tracy (2010) noted that good qualitative research ensures that the research has a worthy topic, sound ethical procedures, rich rigour, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution and meaningful coherence. These areas were all ensured to maintain quality and effectiveness in research by making sure that implicit thoughts and challenges with regards to the research were made explicit and at the same time making sure that the confidentiality and anonymity for the participants is maintained and at the same time the participants were not pressured to disclose any information that they wished not to disclose. Also Tracy (2010) noted that the ethical process has four parts: procedural ethics, situational and culturally specific ethics, relational ethics and exiting ethics. Thus, the researcher made sure that at the start, during and following the completion of the study all ethical procedures were maintained. This study presents five diary entries produced by four children (Amber, Cristiano, James and Trevor) which took place at the end of nurture group sessions. All five journal entries are central to the theme of resilience.

Following each diary entry, there is a conversation between each child and a nurture group educator. Thus, the drawings and writings of the children were analysed through different questions that were asked to the students by the educators. The following are examples of the questions that were asked:

- What is the drawing about?
- What did you write about in your diary?

There were other questions that were asked according to the different situations, to gain a deeper understanding of what the drawing and/or writing is about. Fonagy (2002) determines that a child's experience of the environment is what counts while Fonagy and Target (2007) emphasise the need for an emergence of mental functions such as emotional regulation, the capacity for symbolisation and empathy. In this regard, Peter Fonagy came up with a theoretical framework known as mentalisation which is "a human psychological process, central to understanding and interpreting the behaviours and actions of ourselves and others" (Fonagy & Target, as cited in Warshaw, 2015). This process appears to be closely linked to the method of listening utilised in this research. Mentalisation addresses relational issues through developing on the child's reflective capabilities that can impact the child's experience of themselves and of others in the world (Conway, 2015). The

framework of mentalisation is defined by Fonagy (as cited in Frosh, 2012) as “a form of mostly preconscious imaginative mental activity, namely interpreting human behaviour in terms of intentional mental states (for example needs, desires, feelings, beliefs, goals, purposes and reasons).” This research also reflects upon the following questions:

- What did the story/picture mean to the young person that produced it?
- What associations was the child making in the picture?
- Who might the characters in the story/picture represent?
- How did I (the educator) gain insight into the meaning and connections that the child was making?

This study took place in a nurture group in a primary state school in Malta. The nurture group is a special class that runs within a mainstream school and is generally intended for children whose behaviour puts them at risk of exclusion (Syrnyk, 2012). A nurture group is a specific intervention for children who exhibit SEBD, and was developed for children who were disruptive or withdrawn, experienced difficulties relating to concentration, and/or struggled to make and maintain relationships (Hughes & Schlösser, 2014). Nurture groups were first introduced in London, England by Marjorie

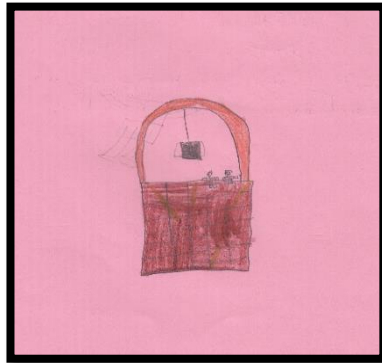
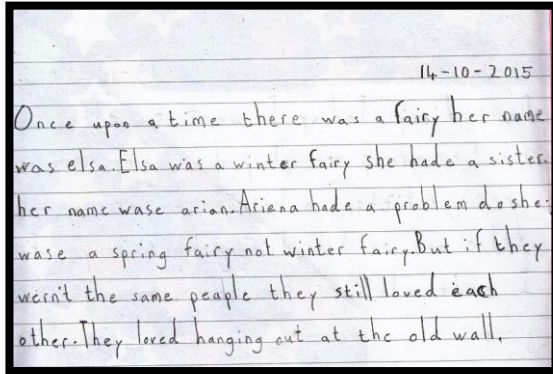
Boxall in the 1970s to help children in the early stages of primary school to improve following their developmentally inappropriate behaviours (Scott & Lee, 2009). One of the struggles faced by the Maltese education system is the inclusion and education of pupils perceived as having and/or manifesting symptoms of SEBD. It is for this reason that local schools started introducing nurture groups and learning support zones in Malta in 2008 (Cefai, Cooper & Camilleri, 2009). In the Maltese context, therefore, nurture groups were construed as an early intervention strategy located in mainstream schools, operating in line with the inclusive education system in the country on a part-time basis (Cefai & Cooper, 2011). At the time of the study there were 29 nurture groups in 31 state schools in Malta. The research is set in one nurture group in Malta. At the time of the study, although the nurture group team worked on a full-time basis in the school, the nurture group was operating on a part-time basis owing to the relatively large number of children enrolled in the group, which they attended for only two to three hours per week.

When the research took place, Amber was 9 years old, Cristiano and James were 10 and Trevor was 8. All four children were following a nurture group programme. Two educators also took part in the study: myself as a nurture group teacher and Philippa, my colleague, who was the nurture group

LSE (learning support educator). Philippa and I worked very well together to support the children in the best possible manner. This study used methods through which children could communicate through speaking about their drawings which Meehan (2015) noted is an effective method to listen to the voice of the child. Syrnyk (2014) also noted that research with children on their drawings showed that children provided verbal and representational reflections on their experiences. Following a nurture group session, every child used to draw and/or write something in his/her diary and then discuss the drawing with a nurture group educator. This study took a social constructionist approach. Lock & Strong (2012) note that as social beings, we go through a remarkable process of constructing our inherent immersion in a shared experiential world with other people. Social constructionism draws attention to the fact that human experience, including perception is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically (Willig, 2013). As an educator and as a researcher, I was interested in exploring how reality would be constructed through my research.

DIARY ENTRIES

Amber's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber after her second diary entry:

Maria: What did you draw in your diary today?

Amber: I drew two fairies and a well.

Maria: And what did you write here?

Amber: I wrote their story here.

Maria: Ok. Their story?

Amber: Do you want to read it?

Maria: Yes sure. (*Reading from the diary*)...Once upon a time there was a fairy...and her name was Elsa and she was a winter fairy. She had a sister and her name was...Aran.

Amber: Anna.

Maria: Ok sorry about that. Anna...(Reading from the diary) Anna had a problem. She was a spring fairy not a winter fairy. But if there weren't the same people, they still loved each other. They loved hanging out at an old well.

Amber: Did you like my story?

Maria: Yes, very much!...And what happened when it was spring time? What will the winter fairy do in spring time?

Amber: She would not go out but they still would meet each other on the well...I read a story about these two fairies.

Maria: Ok. That is good.

Amber: They were still friends even if they were a spring fairy and a winter fairy.

Maria: Ok...

BUILDING RESILIENCE SKILLS

Amber: Like me and my friend. Though we are not in the same class, we are still friends.

Maria: Oh, I see.

Amber: And we wish to play with each other during break time, but unlike the fairies we can't.

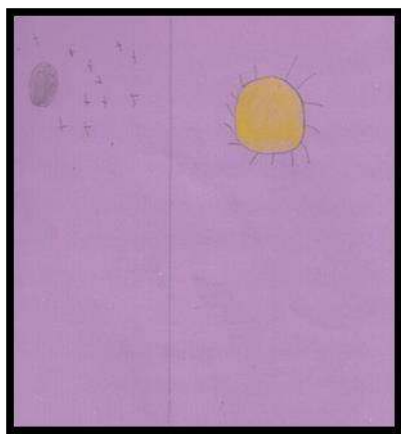
Maria: The fairies meet near the well...

Amber: Yes, at break time, I see my friend but I cannot play with her. I have to play with my classmates.

Maria: Oh! I see.

Amber's fourth diary entry:

Thursday 22th October 2015
Once upon a time there was a unicorn her name was Luna. She was actually a princess. She had a sister her name was Celstia. They both had important jobs Celstia had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon and put the stars in her dark night.



Transcript of the conversation I had with Amber following her fourth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write in your diary today?

Amber: About unicorns.

Maria: About unicorns!...Ok...And what happens in the story?

Amber: Nothing. They, they...once upon...can I read it?

Maria: Yes, yes you can read it.

Amber: Once upon a time there was a unicorn. Her name was Luna. She was actually a princess. She had a sister. Her name was Celestia. They both had important jobs. Celestia had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon and put the stars in her dark night.

Maria: Ok, so these unicorns, were princesses right? Both of them?

Amber: Ehe. (Yes)

Maria: Ok, right...And one had to raise the sun and Luna had to raise the moon. Ok and would they quarrel because one of them had to raise the sun and the other had to raise the moon?

Amber: Hmmm. One time Luna did get jealous.

Maria: Luna got jealous? And what happened when she got jealous?

Amber: She became like evil for a little while.

Maria: She became...

Amber: But this was a film cartoon.

Maria: Ok. It was a film?

Amber: Yes

Maria: She became evil and then what happened?

Amber: She, Celestia, had a student and she made them friends again.

Maria: Ok, they became friends again.

Amber: When Luna was evil Celestia had to banish her because she had to save her people.

Maria: And then what happens?

Amber: She had to banish her into the moon.

Maria: Ok.

Amber: This was a film cartoon but?

Maria: Ok it was a film cartoon.

Amber: Ok.

Maria: And did something happen like this story in real life?

Amber: Yes. I think stories like this happen.

Maria: When?

Amber: My friend and I, we never have time to play at school.

Maria: Why is that?

Amber: Because my friend's teacher, you know my friend...I never get to meet her.

Maria: But you play together.

Amber: No, we don't. They (her friend's teacher and classmates) come out after us and we can never play together.

Maria: And how do you feel about this?

Amber: Sad but I am trying to make new friends...I am like Luna, but I like her sister Celestia...because my friend is like Celestia. I like Luna because I like the night because I like to see the stars at night.

Maria: I see. You like the stars at night. Ok. I see.

Amber: But I love them both...both me and my friend do. And when we meet...you know...at break...we play with each other. We play *My Little Pony* sometimes.

Maria: Luna and Celestia are from *My Little Pony*?

Amber: Yes. Do you know about *My Little Pony*?

Maria: Yes...the unicorns, they have different colours right?

Amber: Ehe (Yes). Did you watch *My Little Pony*?

Maria: Yes, I know about *My Little Pony*?

Amber: Celestia was white and her hair was blue....and...and....her sister same but she had...her hair was black.

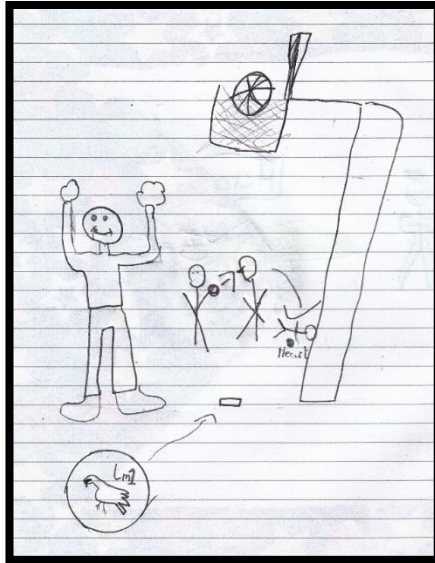
Maria: So both Celestia and Luna are white?

Amber: No Celestia is white and Luna....well...Luna is black but not that dark black, she is more of a dark blue.

Maria: Ok. Thank you Amber.

Amber: Bye, See you.

Cristiano's second diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation Philippa had with Cristiano after his second diary entry:

Philippa: You're ready from your diary?

Cristiano: Yes.

Philippa: What did you draw in your diary today?

Cristiano: I drew the children, well I drew my friends in the yard. We, before coming here, we had PE.

Philippa: Ok and what did you do in PE?

Cristiano: We were playing basketball and, then, you see these boys...

Philippa: Yes, I was going to ask you about that?

Cristiano: These boys, they are Noel and Johan, they, well Johan hit Noel with the ball in his head, and, Noel hit him back. They started to fight and Noel fell on the floor.

Philippa: Ok and then was happened?

Cristiano: The PE teacher, went, took them to the head of school.

Philippa: And how to you think they felt?

Cristiano: Sad for sure, and, I think, they were angry...

Philippa: Ok.

Cristiano: ...and hurt.

Philippa: And who is this boy standing here.

Cristiano: That is me.

Philippa: Ok and what are you doing there?

Cristiano: I feel happy, because, well before, whenever I saw someone fighting, I used to fight too, but, I didn't fight today.

Philippa: Ok and here what did you draw?

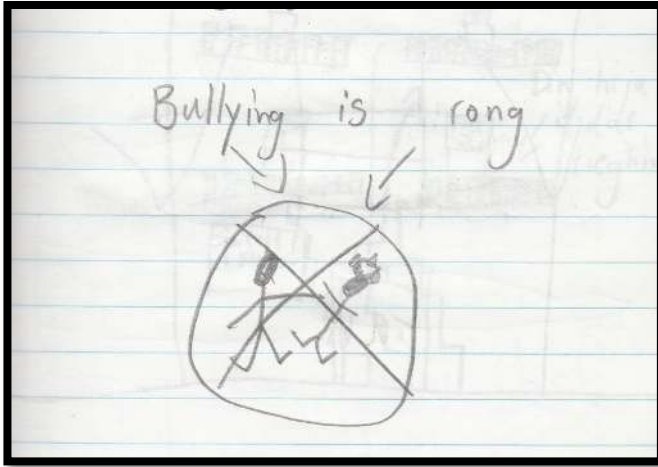
Cristiano: I drew, today I got this box from home. I have old coins in it and I drew the old lira.

Philippa: Ok good.

Cristiano: I go back to class now.

Philippa: Yes sure.

James's sixth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with James after he wrote in his sixth diary entry:

Maria: What did you write and draw over there James?

James: I wrote 'bullying is wrong'. Then I drew a boy hitting another boy.

Maria: Why did he hit him?

James: He was calling him names.

Maria: James did anything happen at school today? You look quiet.

James: No, nothing!

Maria: What was he calling him?

James: He, the boy, that was being hit, had called the other boy warden.

Maria: Why?

James: Miss, do you promise not to tell anyone?

Maria: James, I am here to help you. If by telling someone, I can help you.

James: I'm afraid.

Maria: James, I am here to help you. If, if I do not know what's (happen) happening, I cannot do anything about it.

James: Francesco, you know, the boy that is in my class...

Maria: Yes, what about him?

James: He, and Karl, and Jake are calling me warden. I am very angry about it. I wish I can hit them and make them stop.

Maria: And why are they calling you that, warden, I mean?

James: Last week, Katya, forgot her Maths at home and I, I told the Sir what happened.

Maria: Ok.

James: And then, he told me warden, because, he (he) wanted my sister to tell him.

Maria: And how did you feel about that?

James: I help my sister. My sister is not like me. I mean, I didn't want her to get into trouble, that's why I told him.

Maria: Ok and how did you feel when your teacher told you warden?

James: I didn't like it. I shut up and didn't speak.

Maria: Ok and then what's happened?

James: Then in break, Francesco, Karl and Jake started to call me warden. All the boys are calling me that. All except Kurt, whenever I speak they say "warden" or "shut up warden".

Maria: It is not nice to have people call you names.

James: I really wish to make it stop.

Maria: Can I speak to your teacher?

James: Miss, I don't want them to make more fun of me.

Maria: James that is bullying. People shouldn't give you names. No one. Not even a teacher. I am here to help you.

James: Thanks miss.

Maria: Would you allow me to speak to your teacher?

James: Yes but tell him to not make fun of me.

Maria: If someone makes fun of you, I will then speak to the head of school. This calling of names has to stop.

James: I know.

Maria: And you, you have to be assertive. When they call you warden, when Francesco or Karl or Jake tell you warden, you look at them and tell them Stop.

James: I try but I feel so small when this happens.

Maria: I know. How are you feeling now?

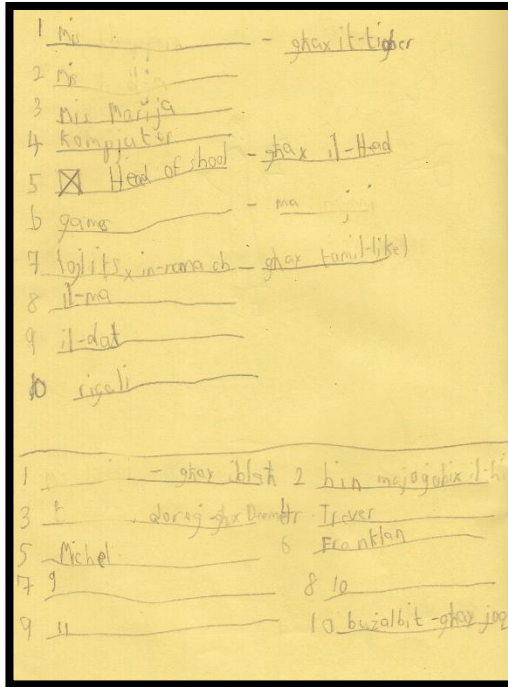
James: Better, much better.

Maria: I am glad. I will speak to your teacher tomorrow.

James: Ok. Bye, miss and thank you.

Maria: Bye, James.

Trevor's ninth diary entry:



Transcript of the conversation I had with Trevor after writing his ninth entry in his journal:

Maria: I can see that you didn't draw a story in your diary today?

Trevor: No, I did a list.

Maria: A list? Of what?

Trevor: Of things I like and hate.

Maria: What are the things that you like?

Trevor: My teacher.

Maria: And why do you like your teacher?

Trevor: Because she's my teacher.

Maria: And what else did you write?

Trevor: You, Ms. Philippa, the Sir, the computer, Mum, Dad, Grandma's house, because she cooks food for me and presents.

Maria: Ok. I see. And what are the things you do not like.

Trevor: Duncan dorange, time, I don't like time, Micheal, Trevor and Franklin, from GTA and the Head.

Maria: You know you cannot play GTA.

Trevor: I know. That's why I don't like it.

Maria: Ok. That game is not for children your age.

Trevor: I know. I do not play it. Mum doesn't want to buy it for me. But my cousin has it.

Maria: Ok I hope he doesn't let you play it.

Trevor: No, I hate them because, when I am at grandma and he is there, he plays, he locks himself in the room and he doesn't play with me.

Maria: Oh. I see. And why you don't like the head?

Trevor: You know what happened yesterday?

Maria: Yes, I know. You were sent home.

Trevor: That was unfair. I didn't do anything.

Maria: Ok.

Trevor: She told me “you need to go home and relax”. When I am angry, I come here and I play Jenga and calm down.

Maria: I know.

Trevor: And yesterday, I wasn’t angry. Duncan made me angry when he hit me.

Maria: I know.

Trevor: I don’t like Duncan. He thinks he is cool!

Maria: Sometimes there are people that we do not like.

Trevor: Yes, and I don’t like Duncan dorange.

Maria: Ok. Do you wish to write someone something else in your list?

Trevor: No that’s all. Bye.

Maria: Bye Trevor.

DISCUSSION

This paper questioned whether nurturing educators can enhance resilient skills in children through journal writing and drawing. The diary entries presented in this study support Johnson’s (2008) claim that resilience is both a process and an outcome. The diaries show that the children in this study passed through a process where they needed to trust the nurture group educators with their thoughts and concerns so that in return they

could be able to be able to open up to them. When given skills the four child participants were able to be resilient. This can be linked to Poulou's (2007) attributes to resilience. Nash et al. (2016) also note that resilience is a relational process. The diary entries, especially Amber's diary entries and James's diary entry show this relational process as they presented how resilience was establish through the positive relationship they built with their nurture group educators. For example Amber gave insight on a concern of hers through two different stories and asked for support in a challenging situation she was going through during break time. Having a good relationship with the nurture team helped Amber in establishing this. When analysing James diary entry about a bullying situation he was going through, it could be noted that there was a concern also shown from the nurture group team towards such behaviour, however as Syrnyk (2012) identified the nurture group team were empathic, objective and maintained a reasoned demeanour so to be able to guide and support James as well as giving him the skills to fight back adversity. On the other hand Cristiano presented an account where he practiced resilience by not involving himself in a fight. Masten (2011) noted that resilience is in part the ability to resist adverse situations. Cristiano by not involving himself in a fight presented an achievement that he did whilst at the same time resisting the

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urge to fight like he used to do. Trevor's diary entry also presented a situation where he stopped playing a particular game that was "making him feel angry all the time". Prior to this journal entry the nurture group team also discussed with Trevor's mother some suggestions about how the exposure towards this game could be stopped for Trevor's benefit. This suggested collaboration between the nurture group team and Trevor's mother and at the same time through this collaboration, Trevor was supported to successfully adapt and change despite the challenging or threatening circumstances similar to what was noted by Poulou (2007).

CONCLUSION

This study presented five diary entries that four primary school children who used to attend a nurture group produced. The five diary entries evaluated in this paper were all in some way linked to resilience. Two diary entries (Trevor's diary entry and Cristiano's diary entry) presented ways in which resilience can be a learned process for children. On the other hand, Amber's diary entries and James's diary entry focused on how resilience is a relational process. When Amber and James spoke out about things that were concerning them to a trusted educator, they were able to start to face the friendship challenges that they were experiencing at school. Thus, journaling was an effective

tool for these children to voice their concerns about their experiences at school and outside of school. Furthermore, having a trusted educator who they could open up to about their worries supported the children in becoming resilient instead of exhibiting adverse behaviours. Educators need to reflect upon their role and practices as suggested by Syrnyk (2012) and Billington (2006) and need to be able to listen to the unheard voices of the child as discussed by Flynn (2014) especially those who are following the nurture approach in order to better understand and support children and young people who exhibit SEBD. They need also to support children in developing their resilient skills. It is suggested that initiatives that enhance and encourage voice are given to children in schools. Finally, educators need to instil in themselves a nurturing attitude towards children so that children can feel better supported in order to enhance their resilient skills both at school and in their everyday lives.

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FOSTERING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN THROUGH FINANCIAL LITERACY

**KATYA DE GIOVANNI AND
JOSETTE BARBARA-CARDONA**

INTRODUCTION

Children and youth are both current and future actors in social and economical fields of life, whose decisions will influence the development of their societies (UNICEF, 2012). Such a statement reinforces the responsibility of educators to enhance financial literacy from an early age. Solomon, Nhete and Sithole (2018) believe that children should be exposed to financial literacy as from the early years of their educational journey, particularly due to the variety of products and services readily available on the market. The consequences of not doing so could may lead to future risky behaviour with unpleasant consequences (Solomon et al., 2018). The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2005) suggests that financial literacy for children and youth is crucial in their transition from childhood to adulthood, and argues for early financial education. It defines Financial Literacy Education as:

The process by which financial consumers/investors improve their understanding of financial products and concepts and, through information, instruction and/or objective advice, develop the skills and confidence to become more aware of financial risks and opportunities, to make informed choices, to know where to go for help, and to take other effective actions to improve their financial well-being.
(OECD, 2005, p. 26).

In such a modernised world, there is a higher risk that households and individuals fall in the debt trap or bankruptcy, and this is mainly attributed to attitudes towards financial management and the lifestyle one chooses to lead. Given such exposure to possible consequences, children should not only be equipped by financial literacy skills, but also be resilient when faced with such circumstances. Resilience can be defined as the ability to effectively adjust to events that disrupt normality and general functioning (Masten, 2014). In other words, “Resilience refers to positive adaptation of a system during or following significant disturbances” (Masten, Herbers, Cutuli, & Lafavor, 2008, p. 76). This research has been inspired to further explore the relationship between financial literacy knowledge and nurturing resilience in children. It seems that

there is a gap in knowledge regarding the relationship between early financial education and fostering resilience in children, thus this study attempts to fill such a lacuna. The research question is: How will a financial literacy educational programme nurture resilience amongst children? More specifically the present study seeks to:

- Enhance the understanding of the benefits of financial literacy programmes at an early age through experiential learning
- Understand the children's perception of money through their social realities
- Explore the effects of financial literacy on the children's resilience

BACKGROUND

Sari, Fatimah and Suyanto (2017) suggested that financial literacy should be taught during childhood, as individuals are more likely to practice values related to management of finances and any related behaviour and attitudes in their adulthood. Te'eni-Harari (2016) believes that as children reach the age of six years, they start to understand the basic concepts of money and saving money, whilst the value of saving as a

support for the future is normally established by the age of twelve. The age range referred to by Te'eni-Harari (2016), namely 6 to 12 year olds fall within two stages of Piaget's theory of cognitive development, namely the concrete operational stage and the beginnings of the formal operational stage (Piaget, 1970). Therefore, it would be beneficial to further explore such cognitive development stages, to enhance the understanding as to how children grasp the concept of financial literacy since the age range of the subjects of this study is between 8 and 12 years old.

The concrete operational stage of Piaget's theory of development states that children at this age are able to logically process problems which are linked to concrete tasks and objects (Piaget, 1970). However, children who are within the formal operational stage can solve problems logically and hypothetically and can deal with abstract tasks (Piaget, 1970). On the other hand, Vygotsky suggests that children at that age learn through creativity and imagination especially if that imagination is encouraged within their own cultural world (Vygotsky, 2004). Such imagination and creativity is assimilated through their concrete social interactions and experiences within the social world (Fleer, 2015). Even though the developmental theories are essential to appreciate a child's cognitive developmental stage to understand the basics of

financial literacy, Sherraden, Johnson, Guo and Elliott (2011) believe that exposure to financial concepts through socialisation is vital. A study conducted by Sherraden et al. (2011) with elementary school children concluded that children who participated in a financial education programme scored significantly higher in a financial literacy test than those children who did not take part in the programme. Moreover, the study concluded that the financial capability of children increases if they have the opportunity to participate in such educational programmes by means of experiential learning (Sherraden et al., 2011). The term ‘financial capability’ entails financial knowledge and understanding, responsibility as well as skills to manage finances. Thus, given that according to Piaget and Vygotsky, children between the age of 8 and 12 years understand their world through creativity and concrete tasks, it can be concluded that the best method to deliver financial education programmes is through experiential learning.

According to Gross and Rutland (2017), experiential learning “provides opportunities for students to be actively engaged in acquiring skills and knowledge” (p. 2). Therefore, it continuously engages the students from just receiving information to being active participants throughout their learning (Gross & Rutland, 2017). Experiential learning

generally involves hands-on exercises, group activities and continuous discussions rather than simply one-way communication. As a matter of fact, the ‘Child Social and Financial Education’ (CSFE) manual (UNICEF, 2012) recommends that financial education programmes should incorporate experiential methodologies:

Given CSFE’s participatory and experiential focus, its materials should be culturally appropriate. Hence, children can ‘learn by doing’ through activities where learning is based on their own environment, either working alone or in small groups, and by sharing ideas and discovering their areas of interest. By allowing children some control over their learning, and creating spaces in which they can express themselves, CSFE empowers children to become active participants in their own learning. (UNICEF, 2012, p. 24)

Sherraden et al. (2011) and Sari et al. (2017) argue that children acquire financial literacy not only through educational programmes but also through socialisation within their social circle. The centre of the social circle of a child is the family or the primary caregiver. Since, as it has already been established, children acquire financial literacy mostly through experiential

learning, what they experience within the family and social circle has an impact on the perception of the concept of money and its management. A theory that clearly explains this notion is the social learning theory by Albert Bandura. Bandura's social learning theory mainly entails how individuals of any age react and behave in the presence of others, whilst taking in information from their surroundings (Grusec, 1992). The theory supports cognitive processes and emphasises that learning takes place also through observation and modelling behaviour (Shaffer & Kipp, 2010). The family members of children generally spend considerable time together, so the children accompany their parents during their daily activities where they can easily observe how their parents behave as consumers and get a rough idea of how money is managed (Pillai & Achuthan, 2015). This process is referred to as family socialisation (Gudmunson & Danes, 2011).

Resilience and Financial Literacy?

According to Zolkoski and Bullock (2012), resilience in children is fostered by “protective factors” (p. 2298), and these factors are “self-regulation and self-concept, family conditions and the community support” (p. 2298). This indicates that primarily, resilience in children is threefold, it stems from the intrapersonal competences, family influences and the support

received by the community the individual resides in. If one had to link these three factors of resilience to financial literacy, one can observe that financial literacy can be integrated in everyday functions at school and family activities. The initial protective factor as claimed by Zolkoski and Bullock (2012), that is self-regulation and self-concept, is the ultimate aim of financial education. Financial literacy programmes are not only about the technicalities behind money management, but also about self-regulation and self-concept, which are key components of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). The school forms a major part of the community sphere of a child, thus activities that foster resilience in schools should be influential and meaningful.

Stewart and McWhirter (2007) state that preventive practices that enhance any social and educational skill will foster resilience in the long run especially if taken as a whole school approach. The aim of intervention programmes at school is to intervene with the individual as much as possible, to the extent that sometimes even the family is involved throughout the process of the programme. In light of this notion, resilience intervention must not only be part of financial literacy programmes, but financial literacy programmes should act as another component in child development to foster resilience.

METHODOLOGY

The participants in the present study were 12 children between the ages of 8 and 12 years old, nine of whom were males. The sampling method adopted was one of convenience as the participants were enrolled in a school programme and were automatically considered as participants for this study. Convenience sampling is an effective way of collecting data from target participants which are readily available for the researcher. However, the outcome cannot be generalised to the whole population (Bryman, 2016).

This study adopted the social constructionist paradigm as it aims to understand the children's perception of money and in so doing comprehend their social world and how such perceptions were attained. A qualitative research design was used since this methodology allows subjects to express their subjective thoughts about the topic of study (Neuman, 2014). Action research was considered as the most suitable research method given that the intention of the study was to explore the impact of an innovative programme on the behaviour of the participants (Corey, 1954). Corey (1954) emphasises that action research supports professionals who are seeking to enhance their practices, especially in the field of education. Moreover, the researchers were fully involved and present throughout the whole process, thus being able to obtain first

hand data. All the participants regularly attended the school programme of six weeks which consisted of different activities, one of which was financial literacy. Financial literacy sessions took place once a week, and each session was around 90 minutes, totalling up to nine hours. The lessons were delivered by a psychology graduate under the full supervision of the researchers. The researchers were present during the sessions and observed the children's behaviour and responses during the lessons presented.

The data collection started off with a short initial structured interview. The purpose of this initial interview was two-fold: that of introducing the participants to the subject of financial literacy, and serving as a testing ground for the researchers to get an idea of the thoughts and perceptions of the participants regarding financial literacy and the concept of money. Each participant participated in a ten-minute individual interview and was reminded about the whole research process including the aims of this research. The structured interview included six questions anticipating the topics that were going to be discussed in the following six sessions. The interviews were recorded through field notes, as some of the participants were not at ease with the fact that they were going to be recorded. Therefore, it was decided that none of them would be audio-recorded. One of the pitfalls of a structured interview is the risk

of social desirability bias (Bryman, 2016) especially in this case as the participants were well aware that they are going to be part of a research study through the whole course.

The initial interviews were held on the same day the sessions started, and a class-based discussion followed the individual interviews. The first session which followed the interviews served as an introduction to the sessions, and the participants were given the opportunity to discuss their views regarding the concept of money. The six sessions were held in a classroom setting, and the mode of delivery was through experiential learning such as discussions, group work and creative activities. The sessions were professionally researched and planned accordingly. The data collection phase was concluded by a post-interview, which was a simple structured interview similar to the initial interview in format, using the same method. At this point, the participants were more enthusiastic to participate in this interview, as they felt confident and proud that they have learnt new concepts about financial literacy. The post-interview also served as an evaluation of the whole course. The data collected from the initial interview and the post-interview were analysed through thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Thematic analysis was deemed to be the best method to analyse the data for this action research due to its flexibility as a method.

Table 1. *The Topic Titles of the Financial Literacy Sessions*

	Financial Literacy Sessions
1	What is Money?
2	Making Money
3	Taking a Decision: Choosing between the ‘Needs’ and the ‘Wants’.
4	Money Responsibility
5	Budgeting
6	Saving

Ethical considerations were thoroughly followed throughout the course of this study, especially since the subjects were minors. Parental consent was obtained before the start of the data collection. The participants were debriefed about the observation that was being held during the financial literacy classes, and they fully participated during the actual lessons. Field notes and the pre-test / post-test were the only data filled documents during the study and were also kept confidential. Permission was attained through the University of Malta Research Ethics Committee.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The data from the pre and post interviews was analysed separately through the steps suggested by Braun and Clarke

(2006). Both interviews yielded findings which were adequate enough to understand how this financial literacy programme supported the children towards resilience.

Table 2. *The Main Themes and Subthemes Extracted from Pre-Interview Data*

Main Themes	Subthemes
The concept of money	What is money? Earning money
Livelihood	Consumerism (materialism)
Planning ahead	Saving Budgeting

The Concept of Money.

The first theme can be linked to the first question which the participants were asked: *What is Money?* The rationale behind this question was to get to know the children's thoughts and perceptions about money at such a tender age, and also to get them engaged in the subject. Two participants were happy with the idea that money is just something you use to pay with. Four participants replied that they use money to buy stuff. Other participants gave money a more tangible meaning whilst trying to argue how money is actually made. "*Money comes from the money machine and it turns paper to paper money and metal becomes euros and cents*" (Jane, Female, 12). On the other

hand, various replies were given in relation to how money is earned. Tony (Male, 10) highlighted that money comes from the work we do, however the rest gave it a more concrete description. For instance, two participants said that whilst observing parents and adults using an ATM, the action in itself convinced Ron (Male, 8) and Paul (Male, 8) that “*Money comes from the ATM*”. Whilst George (Male, 9) and Keith (Male, 8) claimed that “*Money comes from bank*”. Only one participant managed to conclude that money really comes from the work we do. Gasiorowska, Tomasz, and Wygrab (2012) highlighted that children who are within Piaget’s concrete operational stage are expected to be familiar with the meaning of money in terms of how money is symbolically represented but not necessarily know how to use money properly in an economic context. From the findings, it seems that the participants had a vague idea of what money is and how money is handled, however, it was not so easy for them to make a connection between money and economic activities to earn such money.

Livelihood.

There was an attempt from only two participants to link money to livelihood. Fred (Male, 11) claimed that “*Money makes people live. You can buy food, you can buy clothes and it can make the world go round!*”. Another participant said “*Money*

is a special thing that we use to make our lives easier by buying things” (Edward, Male, 10). Clearly these two participants at this stage had already made a rationalised connection between everyday living necessities and lifestyle, and money possession. However, the other participants were more interested in utilising money for the possession of things they liked, and most probably do not necessarily need. Jane (Female, 12) said *“I spent my money that I receive from my parents on food, makeup, expensive watches, shoes, dresses and on restaurants when we go out with my friends and on trips with my parents”*. Research shows that children are able to differentiate between what they need and what they want mainly through what they see and experience in the family (Sherraden et al., 2011).

Planning Ahead.

The idea of planning through saving and budgeting was realistic to a few of the participants. Martin (Male, 9) said *“I think that saving is important because you can use them on your future life and when you want something that you want, you can buy it”*. Others had this idea that once one has the money in hand, one has to spend it *“I put my money in my purse of my money box. If there is a shop which has things I like, I can buy with the money”* (Rose, Female, 9). But generally, all the participants agreed that saving money is important for the future. On the

other hand, budgeting was not something they were really familiar with. However, three of the participants said that budgeting is when one decides the amount of money to be spent. Saving and budgeting go hand-in-hand and students experienced a real taste of these important values during the financial literacy sessions. In fact, Amagir, Groot, Maassen van den Brink and Wilschut (2018) highlighted that financial literacy sessions enhance skills and behaviour in terms of saving and budgeting.

Table 3. *The Main Themes and Subthemes Extracted from Post-Interview Data*

Main Themes	Subthemes
Applying learning	Future selves Support
Self-management	'Needs' and 'wants' Budgeting and saving

Applying Learning.

The participants were motivated throughout the sessions, and during the post interview most of them were very enthusiastic to apply what they had learnt during the sessions in the future. “It was useful as when you grow up you will be better than others about money” (Paul, Male, 8). Keith (Male, 8) indicated that “[it was useful] because now I know how I should use my

money". Most of the students expressed the opinion that they felt that now they had the tools to make good use of their money.

Self-Management.

At this age, children might not have a clear viewpoint about spending the right money on what is essential and what they want (which could be something they do not need). Learning to prioritise, take informed decisions, differentiate between what is really needed and what is not, could be hard to understand (UNICEF, 2012). Only George (Male, 9) claimed "*now I know the difference between the 'needs' and 'wants' and how I can save my money properly*". The rest of the participants did not specify whether they felt confident to differentiate, indicating that such a principle requires further guidance. Conversely, they stressed that they felt more confident in saving and budgeting, and as Fred (Male, 11) concluded "*we learned not to waste money*".

CONCLUSION

It seems that the financial literacy sessions on the whole served as a positive experience to the participants. In fact, the great majority of the participants claimed that they felt more confident in managing their money after this financial literacy course. The methods by which the sessions were conducted

correspond well with what Piaget (1970) and Vygotsky (2004) believe as being the ideal methods of acquiring information, given the developmental stage of the participants. Also, the discussions raised during the sessions presented challenges to provoke thinking of the best possible solutions with the least cost. This is when the ability to be resilient is prompted. Resilience is a transferable skill, and it is believed that once this skill is acquired through preventive practices such as financial literacy, children can become resilient to other impulses and instant gratifications that life presents us with. This study concluded that financial literacy contributes towards self-management, such as controlling impulsive behaviours related to access consumerism (Gathergood & Weber, 2014) which can lead to unnecessary expenses, less savings and greater debt (Seuntjens, van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & van der Schors, 2016).

The small sample was one of the limitations of the study. Another limitation was the fact that this programme was short and discussions might not have been as intense as expected due to time constraints. A recommendation for future research is to replicate the study with a larger number of participants and possibly older age groups. The involvement of the parents or guardians would also benefit knowledge about financial literacy and resilience, as one can explore how the

financial knowledge and behaviour of the family is fostering resilience in children and the consequences of such.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ms. Ilayda Özdemir, Erasmus student from İzmir Ekonomi Üniversitesi, Turkey

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PART 3
TEACHER EDUCATION

ENHANCING RESILIENCE THROUGH TEACHER EDUCATION

CARMEL CEFAL

INTRODUCTION

Schools and educational settings are ideally placed to support the healthy development of vulnerable and marginalised children because of their broad reach, having access to practically all children for at least one decade at a crucial time in their development. They thus provide a window of opportunity to bring about a positive change in the lives of vulnerable and marginalised children. Ungar's (2012) ecological perspective of resilience has helped to construe the understanding of resilience within a more socially-embedded understanding of wellbeing, underlining how protective and health promotion systems, such as schools, make it more likely for every child to enjoy a positive development.

Various protective school-based factors have been found to promote the healthy cognitive, social and emotional development of vulnerable children and young people. These include a supportive 'safe-base' environment which reduces the stress in children's lives whilst providing opportunities for caring relationships with teachers, social connectedness and inclusive peer networks, and active, meaningful and rewarding

engagement in learning and social activities (Garmezy Masten & Tellegen, 1984; Rutter et al, 1998; Ungar, 2008, 2018; Werner & Smith, 1992). The identification of the protective processes have led to the development of various school-based interventions which seek to nurture the resilience of children and young people facing adversity. Universal interventions, such as a whole school approach to resilience, focus on the whole school population, whilst targeted interventions address the needs of particular groups of children or individual children considered to be at risk in their development.

Teacher Education in Resilience

Teacher education is one of the key effectiveness processes of resilience interventions in schools. The staff needs to be competent in implementing any resilience intervention at their school; inadequate teacher education is related to a lack of teacher commitment, low self-efficacy, and poor quality teaching and programme implementation (Askill-Williams, Dix, Lawson & Slee, 2012; Reinke, Stormont, Herman, Puri, & Goel, 2011). Teacher education not only helps to ensure teacher commitment and quality delivery, but also contributes to teachers' own social and emotional competence, enabling them to create a classroom culture that promotes the learning and practice of social and emotional and resilience skills as a daily

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classroom process (Jennings & Greenberg, 2009; Jennings et al., 2017). Rather than just providing informational sessions on the implementation of resilience interventions, quality teacher education takes a personal-relational approach (Durlak, 2015), with relationships being one of the key processes in resilience enhancement in schools. Besides programme implementation, teachers need to be adequately trained in recognising and addressing the social and emotional needs of children and young people, developing students' social and emotional learning and resilience skills, establishing healthy relationships with students, and working collaboratively with peers and parents (Askell-Williams, et al., 2012; Cefai, Bartolo, Cavioni & Downes, 2018; Jennings & Greenberg, 2009). They also need to develop their own social and emotional competence and resilience skills, including emotional regulation, conflict management, collaboration, and empathy amongst others (Brown, Jones, LaRusso, & Aber, 2010; Collie, Shapka, & Perry, 2011; Jennings et al, 2017).

Such comprehensive training enables school staff and classroom teachers to take a whole school approach to resilience, focusing on curricular, cross-curricular, and whole school interventions, balancing taught content with its application in the classroom, whilst attending to their own

social and emotional needs (Cefai, in press; Schonert-Reich, Hanson-Peterson & Hymel, 2015).

Various studies have reported that teachers feel that they are inadequately trained in addressing the social and emotional and resilience needs of their students and that their sense of competence in this area is relatively poor when compared to their subject matter expertise (Askeff-Williams & Cefai, 2014; Raptis & Spanaki, 2017; Reinke et al., 2011; Schonert-Reich et al, 2015; Vostanis, Humphrey, Fitzgerald, Deighton & Wolpert, 2013). In a study with school teachers in South Australia, Cefai and Askeff-Williams (2017) found that while some teachers mentioned that they did receive professional learning in this area at their own schools, in most instances such education was either lacking or not useful in their initial teacher education programme, particularly in areas such as building healthy relationships and responding to students' social and emotional needs. In their review of studies in initial teacher education in mental health promotion in the US, Schonert-Reich et al. (2015) reported that teachers in university education received little training on how to promote students' social and emotional learning and resilience and how to create positive classroom contexts.

The multi-country, cross cultural project Enhancing Resilience Through Teacher Education (ENRETE) sought to

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address this gap at the European level by developing a collaborative Masters in Resilience in Education. The following sections provide more details on the ENRETE Master programme, including the programme content, principles, pedagogical approach and preliminary evaluation, amongst others.

ENRETE Master Programme Content

ENRETE is an Erasmus+ project co-funded by the European Commission (2016-2018). The aim of the project is to develop a set of teacher education modules in student resilience which constitute a European Master in Resilience in Education. The modules seek to build the capacity of educators to address from an early age the academic, social and emotional needs of children at risk in their development, including children from ethnic, linguistic, and migrant communities, from socio-economic disadvantage, deprivation and neglect, and children with individual educational needs. The ENRETE consortium consists of six university partners in Europe, namely the University of Malta as the leading partner, University of Crete, University of Lisbon, University of Pavia, Rijeka University, and Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava.

The ENRETE Master Programme consists of three main components, namely resilience taught courses, a practice

placement, and a research component. The resilience taught courses consist of seven modules covering theory, research and practice related to the resilience of children and young people within educational contexts. The modules cover such areas as theory and research on resilience in human development, competences and pedagogy in resilience education, planning, implementing and evaluating resilience programmes, contextual and systemic processes in resilience enhancement, working with parents and professionals in enhancing resilience, and the health and wellbeing of practitioners themselves.

The observation and practice placement provides course participants with the opportunity first, to observe and critically evaluate various resilience-focused services and facilities for children and young people. They will then apply the competences learnt during the course in actual contexts under the mentoring and supervision of the field supervisors. Their practice will be evaluated on the basis of their planning, delivery and self-evaluation of resilience building tasks focused on five key competences addressed in the course, namely resilience skills building; relationships, communication skills, and classroom climate; engagement: pedagogy & implementation; working with staff, parents and other professionals; and professionals' own resilience, health and wellbeing. The research component of the programme consists

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of a module in advanced research methods in resilience education, followed by a supervised dissertation based on professional practice.

ENRETE Master Programme Principles

A systemic, ecological perspective. The theoretical framework of the Master programme is underpinned by a systemic, ecological perspective of resilience (Ungar, 2012). Within this perspective, children's and young people's resilience is more likely to occur when society provides the services, support and resources required for positive development, with the support of all key stakeholders involved. This puts the onus of responsibility for resilience enhancement on the context and contextual processes rather than on the victims of poverty, abuse, disadvantage or adversity themselves (Cefai et al., 2018). Within this perspective resilience becomes open to all rather than the invulnerable, stress-resistant few, with all children having the opportunity to develop resilience within protective social contexts at home, school, peer groups and the community (Ungar, 2018). In a recent review of studies, Ungar (2018) reports that systemic resilience is the result of multisystemic, interdependent interactions through which actors, whether individuals or systems, secure the resources required for adaptation and sustainability in stressful

environments. In an evaluation of preventive resilience programs, O'Dougherty, Masten and Narayan (2013) similarly found that effective resilience interventions are informed by a developmental, ecological systems approach.

A whole school approach. In contrast to one off, bold-on resilience programmes, resilience interventions are more effective when they mobilise the support of the whole school with multiple systems and processes working together to promote resilience at various school layers (O'Dougherty, et al., 2013). The ENRETE Master programme takes a whole school approach to resilience, with the whole school community, in collaboration with parents and the local community, supporting students' wellbeing and resilience through direct instruction in resilience competences as part of the curriculum, coupled with the creation of resilience-enhancing classroom and whole school climates. The programme has modules on the planning, implementation and evaluation of resilience programmes in schools, instruction in resilience competences, the classroom climate, working with parents and professionals, and practitioners' own resilience and wellbeing.

Resilience for the school staff themselves. The school's staff need to be resilient themselves not only to ensure quality instruction and programme implementation, but also to provide

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good role models of resilience through their attitudes, behaviour and social and emotional competence. School staff face increasing challenges in their profession which might lead to exhaustion and burnout, and many school based interventions fail to address the social and emotional needs of the staff themselves (Shelemy, Harvey, & Waite, 2019). However, teachers' and students' resilience and wellbeing are symbiotic, and when teachers' own interpersonal needs are addressed, they are more likely to adequately address the social and emotional needs of their students (Beltman, Mansfield, & Price, 2011; Johnson & Down, 2013). The ENRETE Master programme includes a module on developing the practitioners' own resilience and wellbeing through such strategies as collegiality, collaboration, mentoring, professional development, support, self-efficacy and mindfulness (Cefai & Cavioni, 2014; Jennings et al, 2017; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012).

A universal, inclusive approach. By its very definition, the resilience perspective is concerned with the promotion of the wellbeing and positive growth of children and young people facing risks in their development. However, rather than focusing exclusively on vulnerable and marginalised children through targeted interventions, the ENRETE Master Programme adopts a universal intervention approach, targeting

the whole school population, including resilience instruction for all students in the classroom and the creation of resilience-enhancing classroom and school climates. Interventions, however, may also adopt a proportional universal perspective, addressed to the whole school or classroom but with a specific focus on vulnerable or marginalised children (Cefai et al., 2015). Furthermore, the universal approach does not exclude targeted interventions focused on the needs of particular groups of children or individual children considered to be at risk in their development.

Evidence-based but contextually relevant. In line with its evidence-based approach, the ENRETE Master programme presents the latest developments and research in the field and critically examines programmes and interventions, avoiding linear and prescriptive approaches. The course participants are encouraged to take a critical, interrogative stance to existing programmes and interventions, taking into consideration not only the research evidence but also issues related to the application of such interventions in different cultural contexts and the extent to which interventions are responsive to cultural context and the diverse needs of learners. These issues are addressed in various modules on the programme, particularly on the module on resilience programmes and pedagogy.

An integrated theory-research-practice approach. The ENRETE Master programme seeks to integrate theory, research and practice in developing practitioners' competence in addressing the academic, social and emotional needs of learners at risk in their development. Its various taught courses provide opportunities for critical discussion, experiential learning, and collaborative learning. They make use of various resources to enhance the learning process, including journal readings and multimedia resources, and adopting a blended face to face and online learning mode. Some of the taught modules also provide opportunities for students to learn through a skills-based approach, both how to teach and promote the key resilience competences through direct instruction and through their behaviour and relationships, as well as how to develop their own resilience as practitioners. The ENRETE Master's practice placement provides the opportunity to observe and put into practice the competences being learnt on the course as part of the course participants' professional development.

Co-constructivist learning, reflective practice. Through multi-modal teaching and learning processes, combining tutor-led instruction with self-directed learning (eg. journal readings, self reflection), problem-based learning (eg. situational learning, case studies) and interactive and collaborative learning (eg. group work activities), the ENRETE

Master programme provides course participants the opportunity to build their knowledge and practice collaboratively with their tutors and peers, whilst constantly reflecting on, and improving, their practice. The programme's practice placement also encourages a reflective practitioner approach with mentoring and support by the field supervisors. Figure 1 is an example of activities from module 3 on contextual processes in resilience enhancement.

ENRETE Master Programme Evaluation

The ENRETE Master's modules were piloted with 252 school teachers, support staff, professionals as well as postgraduate students, from the six respective partner countries. Training workshops of about twenty hours each were led in each country by the respective project partners who had received training themselves by two international experts. Each partner piloted the introductory module and another module in a way that all the modules except the practice placement and the dissertation were piloted by at least one partner. At the end of the training, workshop participants completed an online questionnaire on the training they had received.

Enhancing Resilience through Teacher Education (ENRETE)


Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Problem based learning activity: Small group activity

Activity 4

- Read the text and discuss, in small groups, the key components – **antecedents, consequences, strategies** – for caring relationships

http://surveydata.uwstatd.org/resources/53_WhatWorksBrief_CaringRelationships_final.pdf



Enhancing Resilience through Teacher Education (ENRETE)

Co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

YouTube Video

Activity 2

Discuss in pair/small groups the most relevant topics presented in the video in the scope of caring relationships in schools

What kids wish their teachers knew | Kyle Schwartz | TEDxKyoto (12:49)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8pcKbf_vpHg



Figure 1. Examples of activities from Module 3 Contextual Processes in Resilience Enhancement

The first two sections of the questionnaire asked participants to evaluate the usefulness of the programme and relevance of the training on a five point Likert scale, including such areas as learning outcomes, theoretical introduction, suggested readings, activities, assessment, resources, method of delivery, and opportunities for active participation. Participants were also asked about their learning during the workshop, such as development of new competences, awareness of new issues, relevance to practice, and improvement of practice. Three open questions at the end examined in more depth what participants found most and least useful in their training. Out of the 252 workshop participants, 231 participants from Croatia, Greece, Italy, Malta, Portugal and Romania completed the online questionnaire.

Figure 2 provides a descriptive illustration of the responses in section 1 of the questionnaire on the overall structure of the programme. The vast majority of the workshop participants found the course structure, content and methodology useful or very useful, including the learning outcomes, theoretical introduction, topics covered, activities, resources, method of delivery, and opportunities for active participation. A considerable number of participants reported that they had no opportunity to evaluate the suggested readings or the assessment of the modules due to the limited time

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available; the majority of those who did experience these aspects of the course, however, also expressed positive views about the assessment and readings.

Figure 3 presents the participants' responses in section 2 of the questionnaire on the relevance of the training to their practice. The vast majority found the training interesting, useful and relevant to their practice and believed that it helped to improve their practice.

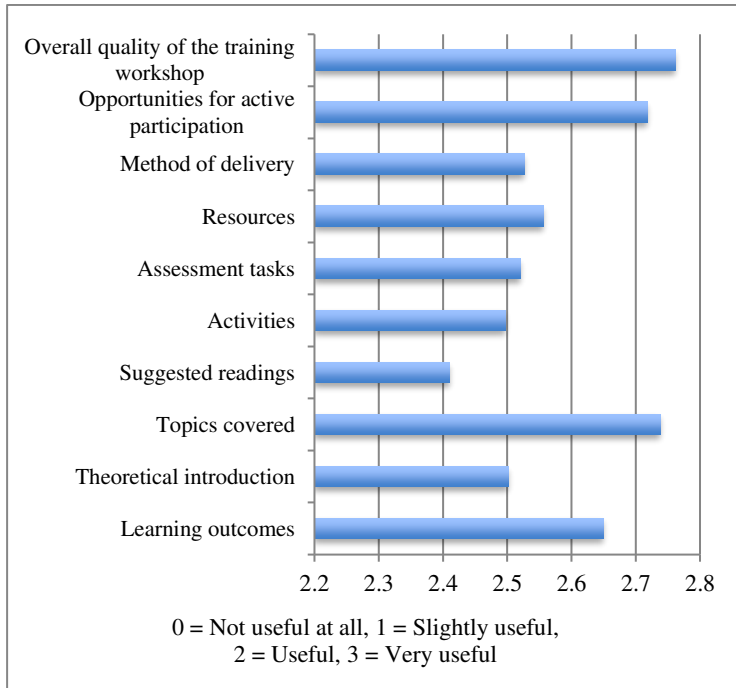


Figure 2. Usefulness of the Course Structure, Content and Methodology

ENHANCING RESILIENCE THROUGH TEACHER EDUCATION

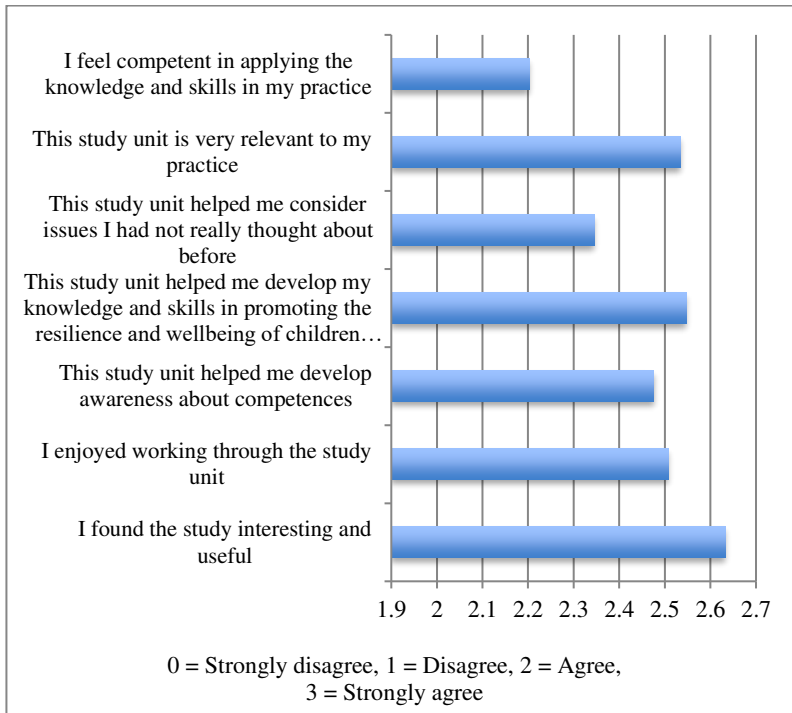


Figure 3. Usefulness and Relevance of the Training

The last three questions provided qualitative data on the participants' experience of the training. When asked about the most useful aspects of the programme, the most common themes were the content of the training, the depth in which the issues were addressed, the strategies used to implement theory in practice, the practical and

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collaborative activities such as video clips, case studies, articles, and group work, and the sharing of experiences and issues during the workshops. While most of the participants reported that there were no less useful aspects in the training or aspects of the training they would change, common themes from those who did raise specific issues included the need for more time to address issues and for practical activities, more practical activities and less theory, some of the references were not accessible because of language, and more opportunity to implement the strategies in practice and share feedback with colleagues on the course. Overall, the training workshops received very positive feedback from practically all participants across the six countries. Participants generally felt that it was useful and meaningful for their practice, with interesting and relevant topics and they enjoyed working through the experiential and interactive activities. The findings, including the various suggestions made by the participants, were taken into consideration by the project team and helped to improve the final modules of the ENRETE Master Programme.

CONCLUSION

The Master in Resilience in Education is an innovative professional development programme for educators and practitioners working with vulnerable and marginalised

ENHANCING RESILIENCE THROUGH TEACHER EDUCATION

children and young people, with taught courses, practice placement and research components. It adopts a systemic, interdisciplinary perspective in promoting resilience across cultures, addressing the whole school community, including students, school staff, parents and communities, and combining tutor-led instruction with experiential and collaborative learning activities, self-directed learning and problem based learning. It has been developed collaboratively by researchers, academics and teacher trainers with extensive competence and experience in this field, in collaboration with other international experts in the area. It has a strong European base, but it is built on current international evidence of what works in promoting resilience for marginalised and vulnerable children and young people. It is designed as a tool to promote inclusion, equity and social justice at a global level by addressing the resilience, wellbeing and mental health of vulnerable and marginalised children and young people.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The project on which this chapter is based, Enhancing Resilience Through Teacher Education (ENRETE), was funded by the European Union Erasmus+ Programme, together with the six partner universities in the project, namely, the University of Malta (lead partner); University of Crete, Greece;

University of Pavia, Italy; University of Lisbon, Portugal; Rijeka Univeristy, Croatia, and Stefan cel Mare University of Suceava, Romania. Special thanks to project members Paul Bartolo, Josipa Bašić, Lovorka Bilajac, Liliana Bujor, Anabela Caetano Santos, Elena Carelli, Otilia Clipa, Aurora Adina Colomeischi, Ana Fonseca, Mariza Gavogiannaki, Corina Gheorghiu, Gianluca Gualdi, Paula Lebre, Alice Lizzori, Anastassios Matsopoulos, Darko Rovis, Petruta Rusu, Doina Maria Schipor, Celeste Simões, Gordana Šimunković, Rachel Spiteri, Vanja Vasiljev Marchesi, and Maria Assunta Zanetti.

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TEACHER COLLABORATION WITHIN SCHOOL ECOSYSTEMS

MICHELLE ATTARD TONNA AND JAMES CALLEJA

THE SOCIAL ASPECT OF TEACHER LEARNING

Collaboration, as a social practice, is a concept which is democratic, reciprocal, sustainable and mutually beneficial. Teachers collaborate by building relations with a partner to share knowledge. Teachers choose to become members of a group which is usually held together by a common pursuit: that of experiencing a shared, learning experience. They develop practices, work on resources, frameworks and perspectives – all those activities which help sustain their mutual engagement in the work or activity. They learn, as a community, because they engage and contribute to the practices of their community. By engaging in meaningful practices, they become involved in activities and behaviour that make a difference to the communities they value (Lassonde and Israel, 2010).

The learning theories of Wenger's (1998) community of practice and Dewey's (1910) notion of constructivism and reflective inquiry, amongst others, both inspire collaborative models of professional development. Teachers actively commit themselves to participate in communities of practice to understand a problem or situation and achieve shared goals.

Collaboration is advocated as a learning model for teachers in sociocultural contexts because it is seen to promote professional growth, critical thinking, reflection and renewal (Chan, 2016).

One fundamental assumption underlying the sociocultural theory is the fact that human mental activity is a mediated process in which symbolically and socioculturally constructed artifacts, in particular language, play an essential role in the social life of the individual (Vygotsky, 1978). Human relations with the world are mediated by physical and symbolic tools. This theory, when applied to teacher learning, places emphasis on the notions of ‘social interaction’ and ‘development’ as the main instigators of human professional growth.

The concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) implies that a learner (novice or mentee) experiences growth through interaction with a ‘more knowledgeable other’ which can be a mentor, teacher, teacher educator, trainer, observer, coach or professional development leader. The more knowledgeable other ‘pushes’ the novice into the most proximal level of development while providing assistance. The roles of novice and expert, in this interaction, are in a state of flux, in that the novice peer can also become an expert when contributing knowledge (Ohta, 2000) and they can often come

together in a collaborative relationship in which each person contributes something to, and takes something away from the interaction. During a collaborative activity, novices and experts teach and learn from each other. The model of involvement in a development process also suggests that teachers acquire different skills and knowledge through collaboration with peers. The group members can provide a collective scaffold for each other and engage in conducting collaborative research and discussions. Such models of teacher learning suggest that cognitive development occurs in social interactions – those which are concrete, embedded in purposeful activities and directed at achieving specific goals (Vygotsky 1978).

The concept of ecosystems, defined by the network of interactions among organisms, and between organisms and their environment, can be applied to teacher communities within schools. In the ecological hierarchy, an ecosystem is at the lowest level and has the essential components for functioning and existing over the long term (Zhao and Frank, 2003). Within education, an ecosystem may be defined as a community network of interactions between the living species – mainly teachers, senior leadership members, students and policy makers but also parents and parent associations, families and teacher unions – and their non-living environment (the school buildings, classrooms, curriculum materials and

resources) utilised to support and enhance teaching and learning. Non-living features inside the school environment make up the habitat of the living species and influence the nature of their interactions. Within the school, living species are connected through networks as they interact in ways to form a system that enables them to thrive and promote learning. Indeed, every element of a school affects relationships, interactions, practices and actions of school community members. Networks of interactions are influenced by the social, political, cultural and systemic conditions embedded within the school ecosystem. The concept of the school as an ecosystem is thus useful “to examine this dynamic process by viewing the interactions of the parts with each other as a well as their interactions with the whole” (Zhao & Frank, 2003, p. 811).

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

At this point, it is important to explain why we have chosen collaborative, social practices as the focus of our study. As teacher educators, we observe teachers collaborating in different social contexts. Yet, although we could see that there are many benefits for teachers who collaborate, authentic collaboration is not easy to achieve. This is partly due to the lack of opportunities in schools for teachers to observe each other and share practices, and also due to lack of cultures which

encourage and reward teachers who work together. We thus find it important to explore these practices with the purpose of informing our future work in schools and with teachers.

There are a number of challenges for teachers in Malta to partake in social practices which are equitable, empowering and mutually reciprocal. In our particular research study, we focus on social practices built by teachers who work in the same context to achieve a shared goal or vision. Thus, the perceived role, identity and social status of these participants, within their community, is on an equitable level. Moreover, the working relationships we explored, within these communities, is conducive to the construction of a reciprocal, sustainable and transformative partnership (Groundwater-Smith, Mitchell, Mockler, Ponte & Ronnerman, 2013). We link the concept of social practices with that of teacher resilience because we perceive resilience as the ability to adjust to diverse situations and increase competence in the face of adverse conditions (Castro, Kelly & Shih, 2010). Resilience is influenced by sociocultural factors which develop or erode the ability to perform as knowledgeable, committed teachers and we believe that those teachers who collaborate within Maltese schools foster resilience and promote a spirit of optimism and human agency.

When we work in schools with teachers we often experience them telling us that they do not have the time to form or participate in professional learning communities. We could indeed observe that they are often overwhelmed by the day-to-day work of teaching and the many responsibilities that go along with it, in particular the increasing demands brought about by reforms which are currently inundating Maltese teaching practices. Yet, as teacher educators we believe that professional learning communities can inspire and energise teachers to commit themselves to their work. Through collaboration they can gain new and improved ideas for how to teach; learn from one another's classrooms; increase their abilities to reflect on their teaching practice and develop their capacities as peer coaches and collaborators (Harris and Rosenman, 2017). Thus, becoming part of a community needs to be a priority in teachers' work. Teachers, with the support of schools, need to make time in their schedules to become members of these communities – such experiences and the resultant learning is intrinsically rewarding, enriching, and most importantly, is likely to positively affect students' learning.

There are a number of professional development models which are inspired by the sociocultural theory and Vygotsky's ZPD. In this research study, we choose to focus on

two: mentoring and co-teaching. This focus is linked directly to our work in schools, as it falls within our responsibility to nurture collaborative practices and empower teachers to form communities which lead to professional learning.

On the basis of such work we decided to develop a small research study, for which we have set these two research questions:

- How does a particular social context (Malta) provide tools and opportunities for professional growth for different groups of teachers?
- How are ecosystems developed in these social contexts?

METHODOLOGY

The everyday experiences of teachers within school ecosystems are dynamic and complex (Zhao & Frank, 2003). To gain an understanding of this we engaged in a qualitative study to explore interactions, relationships, communities and networks created by and for teachers within different schools. Discussions with two, purposefully selected, groups of teachers working in different schools were held. Our decision to select these groups was based on the fact that we knew these teachers well and had established a good rapport with them as a result of our work as teacher educators. One group consisted of nine

teacher mentors and the other consisted of two teachers doing co-teaching.

As researchers, we deliberately engaged in social interactions with our participants to seek deep understandings of the social dimensions of their lived experiences. Moreover, we engaged in negotiating these meanings to gain a better understanding of teachers' school realities. Our understanding is that reality is embedded within a social construction (see Guba, 1990). A data-driven inductive approach (see Boyatzis, 1998) was used to identify patterns, represented by participants' voices, emerging from the 'realities' provided by teachers working within different school ecosystems. Being aware of the dual role we were fulfilling – that of teacher educator and researcher – helped us acknowledge ethical and methodological considerations. We could see no conflict because the participants who participated in the focus groups were not dependent on our instruction, grades or recommendation letters. However, the power disparity could still not be overlooked and we made sure they gave us their informed consent and we refrained from teaching, guiding or advising them while we listened to their narratives.

We got close to these teacher 'realities' by engaging in focus group discussions, which took around 75 minutes. Through dialogue teachers shared their experiences, and the

ensuing discussions allowed meanings to be negotiated by those participating in the discussions. Group discussions provide a different kind of information than those generated from individual interviews and/or observations (Krueger, 1994). In Morgan's (1997, p. 2) words, "the hallmark of focus groups is their explicit use of the group interaction to produce data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group".

Data was analysed using a thematic approach involving staged iterative coding (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). Each focus group transcript was divided into chunks, consisting of short paragraphs of between 20 to 60 words, for which an open-ended coding technique to label comments and assign codes was used. Inductive coding (see Boyatzis, 1998) started with close reading of text and consideration of multiple meanings. Our analysis of the data focused on identifying significant comments and actions that reflected teachers' experiences, challenges and opportunities for collaboration. These codes were eventually compared and grouped to create themes. The findings reported in this chapter focus on teachers' experiences on opportunities for collaboration afforded by their school environment.

Following ethical approval by the relevant organisations, focus group discussions were held in situ outside

school hours and ethical guidelines were adhered to (University of Malta Research Code of Practice, 2017). As teacher educators, we felt the responsibility of not just taking teachers' time to gather data but to follow this up and use it to design and provide support. Participants were provided with information about the study before being asked for their consent to take part. To assure anonymity we used pseudonyms and refrained from gathering and reporting personal data. We also removed reference to names and specific incidents mentioning others to avoid traceability. In addition, confidentiality of the data was guaranteed by storing data in a safe place and limiting access to the two researchers.

FINDINGS

Using schools as ecosystems, we identify four key dimensions to understand teachers' learning environment. These dimensions draw on the work of Toutain, Gaujard, Mueller and Bornard (2014). The main themes discussed in this section are explained in Table 1 below.

Table 1. *Main themes*

Theme	Description
<i>Framework</i>	The role of the school to facilitate teacher learning
<i>Networks</i>	The existing networks for teachers within and outside the school
<i>Culture</i>	The day-to-day ways of how educators operate
<i>Learning spaces</i>	The physical and virtual learning spaces available for teachers

FRAMEWORK

In both schools, these teachers seek opportunities for collaboration. Formal ways of collaboration arise through structured collaboration provided within subject meetings and school development plan groups. Such groups have scheduled weekly time-slots of about 40 minutes. However, as two teachers put it, this form of collaboration appears superficial.

“When I work with others it does not mean that we sit down together and plan things together. We share our resources but do not really discuss them.”

(Teacher 1: Co-teaching focus group)

I think these compulsory weekly meetings are ineffective. Collaboration needs to be initiated by teachers, they need to have a genuine interest in making it work for them.

(Teacher 7: Mentoring focus group)

Teachers also referred to the 12-hour continuing professional development (CPD) sessions offered by the school and scheduled over the scholastic year. For these teachers, such sessions are generally unrelated to the problems they face. Moreover, teachers have neither a say in the topic/s discussed nor on how these sessions are structured. According to one teacher, schools also lack structures that facilitate community building.

In our school, there are five staffrooms for over a hundred educators. There is no time to get to know others, what they think, how they work ... and that is why many teachers fail to collaborate.

(Teacher 2: Co-teaching focus group)

Networks

Teachers value school networking opportunities. However, in many cases these appear rare. For the mentoring group,

collaboration between teachers generally occurs on issues related to challenging behaviour and student progress. These networks are important because they offer teachers a safe space, and support from people who can comprehend the challenges faced.

You would know those teaching your subject a bit more than others because you meet them regularly and share the same staffroom. These would be a small circle of friends with whom you can discuss matters not necessarily related to the subject you teach.

(Teacher 3: Mentoring focus group)

Networking, according to these teachers, depends fundamentally on the people in a particular environment – their personality but also their approaches to teaching the subject. For these teachers, it is more likely that they work with those who share common interests and beliefs about teaching. Teachers also mentioned that networking is generally quite challenging due to lack of time.

Sometimes I do not even manage to eat lunch, let alone collaborate with others. I have a full load and just do not have time.

(Teacher 6: Mentoring focus group)

For these teachers, finding a common meeting slot is difficult. Moreover, a 40-minute period is still insufficient for high quality preparation. Besides, teachers require a quiet place where they can work undisturbed – and school life does not appear to afford this. Given these restrictions, teachers create resources and lesson plans at home, and seek virtual communication to discuss ideas about teaching.

The need for collaboration appears to be driven by teachers' professional needs and priorities. These teachers engage in collaboration when they have an interest in the topic, believe it is beneficial and have the time for it.

For teachers in both the mentoring and co-teaching groups, networking beyond their own school environment is essential, but lacking, for developing classroom practices.

Working with school colleagues limits my professional learning. Hence, I seek to follow and engage in international teachers' blogs for ideas that I can use.

(Teacher 1: Co-teaching focus group)

Culture

In both school contexts, teachers feel a sense of belonging to

the school. However, collaboration is limited to just a few teachers and a lone-fighter culture (see Krainer, 2001) appears dominant. Besides, teachers seem ready to work with only those few who are close to them. For these teachers, their schools lack a culture for developing teaching. Indeed, when discussions shift to teaching and learning, teachers tend to shun innovative ideas and reject them. The only cases where collaboration is evident are with issues regarding students' behaviour and progress.

School structures also offer limited opportunities to meet. Teachers meet and discuss issues in staffrooms. Physical space is limited to staffrooms which are crowded places where teachers cannot focus on their work or even have their break.

Opportunities for collaborative lesson planning or sharing of resources is minimal. The main reasons are time, timetable arrangements and the availability of an adequate and quiet meeting place.

(Teacher 4: Mentoring focus group)

Teachers view lesson observations as crucial to their professional development. Yet, the culture within their schools is not offering them a safe environment where

teachers can learn from and with each other. In these two schools, teachers have their lessons observed by the senior leadership team and education officers. These teachers show preference for observations from colleagues; those willing to offer constructive feedback.

When I visit a colleague's class, I see it as a learning experience. However, when I get visits from superiors, I tend to receive judgements. They tell you what you should do; then that becomes an intimidating experience.

(Teacher 5: Mentoring focus group)

Learning Spaces

Teachers identified both formal and informal collaborative learning spaces. The most common learning spaces for communication are offered by subject departmental meetings, staffroom talk and social media platforms. According to these teachers, to be productive, learning spaces need to be characterised by:

- Extensive time to discuss, share and design activities for teaching;
- A quiet place which offers access to the Internet;

- Open access to material resources.

As one teacher said:

This is not just a matter of finding a 30-minute slot. I want to jot down my ideas, read what others have experienced about a teaching idea and discuss it with colleagues.

(Teacher 1: Co-teaching focus group)

Schools lack the physical space, structure and ambience for teacher collaboration to be nurtured and to flourish. It seems that, as a result, they seek informal ways of collaborating with colleagues both within and outside school hours – usually using social media groups (mostly Facebook, Messenger and Email).

Learning spaces and opportunities for community building may arise both within and outside the school. These can be regulated by teachers themselves or managed by the school. Figure 1 shows that learning spaces for teachers can be located on two axes. For instance, as in the case of the teachers in our study, these spaces are created, or rather, managed by the school (marked by the black square). According to teachers, school-managed learning spaces restrict genuine collaboration

because, within these highly-defined structures, teachers lack the freedom to take control over their learning. Teachers' response to this is represented by their attunement to create and manage internally and externally located collaborative learning spaces (marked by the black and white circle respectively). The dotted line indicates that, while desirable, this shift is more challenging for teachers due to the lone-fighter culture and system restrictions (e.g.: time) that dominate teacher learning within schools.

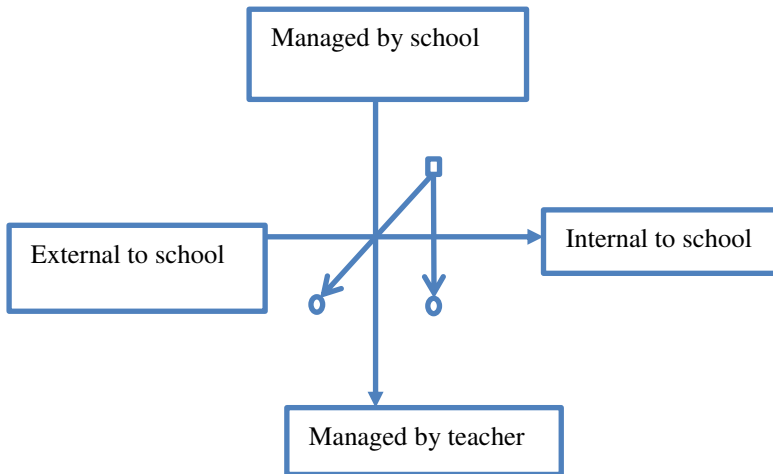


Figure 1. Dimensions of learning spaces for teachers

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For the teachers in this study, their school ecosystems appear to be created, developed and maintained in a top-down approach. Such ecosystems afford learning spaces that are highly structured and culturally ingrained. Within these ecosystems, teachers have limited autonomy to operate and manage these learning spaces. As the data demonstrates, tensions ensue because outsider perspectives (coming from SMT who may not be so familiar with the classroom dynamics, and Education Officers) clash with the teachers' perspectives and hierarchical statuses lead to teachers feeling judged while being observed. In such scenarios the teacher's voice is excluded and the judgemental nature of the class observation can prevent critical reflection and lead to a lack of will from the teacher to try alternative approaches to enhance practice, resulting largely in the maintenance of the status quo. Although collaboration may be perceived as taking place, it is usually a superficial procedural display and teachers will remain in their comfort zones without deep engagement with the professional development goals which these practices set to achieve.

This study shows that these schools' ecosystems promote isolated rather than collaborative learning practices and spaces. Within these ecosystems, teachers face a

challenge between the professional learning opportunities they ‘want’ and what they ‘get’. As an institution, schools lack a focus on community building – both in terms of size and in terms of opportunities for teachers to take initiatives. In such situations, few teachers work as communities, and when they do, they seek like-minded colleagues whom they know well, trust and with whom they share the same values and beliefs. They mitigate the inadequacies present within school ecosystems by creating additional learning spaces external to the school. Indeed, learning for these teachers can be conceptualised as becoming attuned to the constraints and affordances of the school ecosystem. Teachers can become attuned to these restrictions, constraints and affordances of structured, top-down approaches internal to the school ecosystem and seek opportunities for collaboration that are external to the school. Although teachers value collaboration and critical friendship (see Stoll, Harris & Handscomb, 2012), within externally located learning spaces they assume more agency and establish more positive co-learning relationships with colleagues who have common interests and a disposition to invest in learning.

Another important aspect emanating from this data is the acknowledgement that schools are not simply institutions, but viable living organisms with unlimited

possibilities. Schools demonstrate how people behave and also, as organisations, they may have similar characteristics with other schools, and they also differ in the way they address their everyday realities. Understanding the human relationships and also the values, beliefs, norms and habits embedded in these schools is pivotal in understanding how these schools function.

The collaborative practices explored in these two different school contexts show that collaboration, through mentoring and co-teaching, is a tool used by teachers who work together to pursue and review their own purposes as a professional learning community. It is also a means of re-inscribing administrative control within persuasive and pervasive discourses of collaboration and partnership. In these schools, teachers associate more closely with some of their colleagues but their work lacks deeper collaboration and togetherness. The teachers participating in this study attach their loyalties and identities to particular groups within the school, those with whom they work more closely, spend the most time and socialise with more often. Poor communication, lack of space and lack of time characterise such cultures and the interplay of ideas, solutions and networking of practical knowledge is discouraged.

Valid and potent collaborative cultures are those which

support a shared sense of purpose, which focus on long-term improvement, and which support networks of professionals who share problems, ideas, materials and solutions. Hence, while the practices we observed are definitely a good start, we believe schools should strive to develop cultures that support deeper, richer professional interchange among SMT, teachers, students and parents. In such cultures, the underlying norms, values, beliefs and assumptions reinforce and support high levels of collegiality and teamwork, and can be brought about when:

- Time is dedicated for teachers to work together;
- Opportunities are provided for career-long learning and improvement;
- Teachers trust and value the sharing of expertise, advice and help from others;
- There is a shared commitment to solving problems of practice and improving instruction
- There are connections and professional networking with professional associations and other teachers within and outside school.

Teachers working together can help establish the foundation for ongoing, in-depth professional growth within the school. It is hence important that policymakers and

school administrators give more value to informal learning spaces wherein teachers interact with their colleagues; wherein more experienced teachers support those at the beginning of their career, and wherein teacher isolation is replaced by trust, sharing and collaboration.

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**AN ACTION RESEARCH APPROACH TO TRAINING
TO IMPROVE SELF-EFFICACY IN EDUCATIONAL
LEADERS**

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INTRODUCTION

Educational leadership (EL) can be one of the most rewarding jobs. However it can turn out to be stressful if ELs are poorly prepared to fulfill this very demanding multi-tasking role face potential problems. Our world has become a global village which brings together different diversities (ethnicities, races, cultures, religions, customs, languages, socio-economic backgrounds, learning disabilities, etc.) which ELs should be able to manage and help to bring out their potential. Various research studies describe this phenomenon as a possible enriching resource but this may also entail a tough challenge in the school context (Papantuono, 2019). ELs claim that they often end up feeling helpless, since they lack the necessary know-how and competencies to effectively manage these challenges (Papantuono, Portelli & Gibson, 2014).

Various studies (Alvarez-Nunez, 2012; Tschannen-Moran, Wolf-folk Hoy & Hoy, as cited in Chen & Yeung,

2015) document that the most effective attributes of ELs' performance has been attributed to their sense of efficacy, also referred to as the belief of their capability to organise and execute courses of action required to successfully accomplish a specific teaching task in a particular context. A high level of self-efficacy for EL is considered to be a motivational factor at work, enabling them to achieve the success they aspire to, overcoming the obstacles that might arise, as well as trying harder to work with their staff and seek new strategies that can provide successful outcomes (Ross & Gray, 2006).

In 2008, OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) published an important study entitled "*Improving School Leadership*" which highlighted the importance of school leaders having the requisite competences which allow them to adopt an expanded leadership to drive colleagues, school operators, parents and students towards a collaborative climate. Goldring and Greenfield (2002) believe that nowadays a new kind of school leadership is needed, one that is "constructivist, transformational, facilitative, institutional, distributive, or moral" (p.1). Paletta and Baraldi (2008) state that ELs needing to be well prepared to induce a change in their own organisations; to have influence and persuade people to follow the organisational aims;

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communicate and show “competences” and “trust”. According to Balbi and Artini (2009), communication and problem-solving skills are essential competences that ELs need to acquire and master, in order to be able to successfully fulfil their complex mission.

Levine (2005) sustains that the quality of preparation of the school leaders ranges from ‘inadequate to appalling’. University-based programmes designed to prepare the next generation of educational leaders are not up to task” (p.1) Levine’s strong claims has caused heated debates which led to a re-evaluation of the educational leadership knowledge base and training programs (Creighton, Harris & Coleman, 2005). Thurston, Christie, Howe, Tolmie and Topping (2008) state that school staff should be offered training that enhance essential competences which should lead to an impact on practice immediately but also offer long-term empowerment to generate further learning experiences in the future. Stevens (2001) affirms that most ELs are dissatisfied with the traditional model of professional development, such as workshops or lectures, which disseminate information but often does not bring along real and meaningful change in the schools.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Dewey (1933) asked teachers to engage in “reflective action” to transform themselves into inquiry-oriented classroom practitioners. Various other authors followed, (Hart, 1993, Osterman, 1991; Short & Rinehart, 1993) and specifically underlined the importance of adopting reflection as an instructional methodology to be used in training to meet the changing social and political demands placed on schools. Carr & Kemmis (1986) stated that the action research approach to educational leadership has many benefits as it does not limit itself to conveying notions but also contributes to creating a “*forma mentis*” which will accompany the participant beyond the training experience (Nardone & Portelli, 2005). Training should not give a one-size-fits-all solution, but should convey a method of inquiry and a repertoire of actions and strategies to help educators throughout their very challenging profession (Papantuono, et al., 2014).

Robertson (2008) also believes that action research (A-R) is an effective tool that EL’s require to be able to study their own practice and construct the new knowledge needed to answer their current questions and solve their own problems. A-R is a quest for knowledge about how to improve their skills,

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techniques and strategies necessary for professional development but also for school improvement.

AIM OF THE STUDY

Even though attention has been recently given to principal preparation program reform, little research has been carried out to explain how participants develop self-efficacy or which aspects of the training actually contribute to self-efficacy development. The purpose of the present study was to apply an A-R approach to train ELs to improve two essential competencies, problem-solving (PS) and communication (C), necessary to help acquire an improved sense of self-efficacy. This inquiry set out to explore whether an A-R based training can help ELs improve their problem solving and communication competencies and which aspects of the A-R training are perceived by the participating ELs to have brought about these improvements, if any.

METHODOLOGY

This study used a qualitative methodology to explore the perceptions of eleven ELs regarding their experiences during a one-year training-research experience, to understand whether or not they perceived any change in these competences and

consequently an improvement in their sense of self-efficacy, and how they account for any experienced transformations. The conceptual framework guiding this study was informed by a constructivist approach, with the intention of giving voice to how the participating ELs experienced and changed their own reality.

An A-R based training programme was carried out in two groups, one held in Italy, the other in Malta, but the ELs in both locations also had the opportunity to get in touch via a virtual platform. In this study, an A-R approach refers to an active participation in a changing situation, in line with the definition of Denscombe (2010, p. 6) which states that “an action research strategy's purpose is to solve a particular problem and to produce guidelines for best practice”. In line with constructivist thinking, the A-R training programme did not depart from any policy or institutional imperative imposed by the education authorities. Given the research and training purpose of the study, volunteer sampling was considered most appropriate. The data was gathered primarily from semi-structured interviews carried out at the end of the training but other available data sources were used to give body to the findings. This data was collected from the video-recordings of pre-training and mid-training interviews, training and learning

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community sessions, webinars, reflective tasks and diaries. The aim of the study was to gather ‘*deep*’ data about the ELs personal perspectives and interpretations, in line with best practice in qualitative research. Multiple data sources were used to deepen the researcher’s understanding of the issues and maximize the confidence in the findings of qualitative studies. This is in line with the concept of triangulation.

Case studies were used to explore the significant improvements in Problem Solving and Communication competencies as perceived by each EL and discussed in relation to the literature to demonstrate also the transversal effects such as consciousness, efficacy, flexibility, interdependence and craftsmanship (Costa & Garmston, 2015) which may develop from this learning process.

Thematic analysis was carried out to explore the common themes that emerged from the narratives of ELs, which denote those factors that ELs regard to have brought these improvements and rendered this research-training experience effective.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Can an A-R based training help improve PS and C competences in the participating ELs to boost their sense of self-efficacy?

From the 11 cases studies presented (labelled as Head 1-11), a significant improvement was apparent in the ELs' PS and C competences and consequently an improved sense of self-efficacy. This was evident both in the digital (numerical) and analogical (descriptive) evaluations given by the same ELs during the post-training interview. Moreover, additional data gathered from observations of training sessions, logbooks, final presentations etc., further confirm this conclusion. This training seems to have brought change both on a perceptive level (i.e. it challenged rigid beliefs, perceptions, thoughts, feelings and emotions), as well as on the reactive level (i.e. behaviour and actions of the participating ELs).

Firstly, the training allowed ELs to be more conscious of what already worked in their PS and C practice, but also to discover new knowledge and strategies that they can put into action to further improve their competencies. ELs affirm that discovering that there is a logic to what brings them to have effective results helps them feel more in control of their actions and also of what happens around them. ELs report that this awareness gave them a sense of ownership and agency but also a better operative knowledge of what, when and with whom they can use certain actions. They feel like agents of change (Nardone & Balbi, 2015). They discovered that effective results

are hardly ever given by sheer luck or chance, but are an effect of progressive and small informed actions and efforts (Nardone & Portelli, 2005). It is also evident that the training has also handed over to them additional new operative tools which have further boosted their abilities in PS and C (Balbi & Artini, 2009). The ELs reported that these transversal competencies assist them in handling specific difficulties and demands which they initially felt helpless and hopeless about, such as time management, resistance, conflicts, setting boundaries, delegation, and fragmented actions, which induced a sense of empowerment. The ELs assert that the A-R process combined with the constructivist-strategic approach gave them rigorous guidelines and strategies which they feel confident to adapt to different situations within their specific context.

The self-corrective aspect of the A-R process used both in PS and C, enabled ELs to take risks and learn from their failed attempted solutions. They were freed from the fear of making mistakes. They now perceive each action as an instrument to inform their next more fitting action, in line with an A-R approach to practice.

The narratives of the ELs show that this A-R based training seems to have been an effective learning process, which helped them to develop a sense of consciousness,

efficacy, flexibility, craftsmanship and interdependence, which according to Costa and Garmston (2015) are essential states of mind for learners and learning organizations. Apart from improving the problem-solving and communication competencies, this A-R training seems to have triggered a transversal effect on the ELs to better their learning and their general leadership attitude.

The various reflective opportunities offered by the A-R based training, seem to have helped ELs not only acquire consciousness of their already effective competencies in PS and C but also enabled them to understand why they are effective, and how to use them more effectively. This training programme also offered opportunities for collective reflections. This participatory aspect of the A-R based training brought ELs to think outside the box and consider other perceptions and necessary competencies which could improve their practice, which they may have otherwise ignored. In other words, they became conscious of the gaps between what they were doing and what they should be doing by observing other realities. They moved from an unconscious incompetence to a conscious incompetence level.

The combination between the A-R process with constructivist-strategic content handed over to the ELs

operative knowledge and tools to improve their PS and C competencies, reaching a conscious competence level. ELs affirm that now they know what they need to do, what actions they can take up or avoid (failed attempts) to go beyond their present limits. They gained knowledge on the process (A-R cycle) and content (operative knowledge and flexible strategies).

This A-R based training enabled ELs to undergo a perceptive-reactive *saltus* (Sirigatti, Stefanile & Nardone, 2008) triggered either by direct experience of tangible changes in their own practice and/or by indirect observations of changes shared by the other ELs during the learning community sessions (Nardone & Balbi, 2015; Nardone & Portelli, 2005; Nardone & Watzlawick, 2005; Papantuono et al., 2014). The ELs recognised that the new actions and practice gave them effective results both in PS and C. Most ELs asserted that even though their competencies have improved, they still required careful attention, reflection and planning to act adequately and effectively. Some ELs disclosed that there were instances, even critical situations where they witnessed that their competences had become unconscious and that they come to them naturally and automatically. Most ELs expressed that they are aware that they can master and reach an unconscious competence through

further practice. It is clear from the narratives of ELs, that the self-corrective aspect of the A-R approach brought them not only to 'risk out' the new behaviour but also to want to better themselves further by applying the acquired skills with more precision. It seems that this A-R based training created a momentum, which induced a developed sense of control over one's actions and consequent reactions, and an urge towards excellence and improved performance.

Which are the specific aspects of the training, perceived by the participating ELs to have helped them in these improvements? Thematic analysis was carried out to explore which factors ELs regarded to have brought these improvements and rendered this research-training experience effective. Six overarching themes emerged: *professional and personal development, praxis, critical reflection, interdependence, relationship management and exercise of control.*

Professional and personal development (Table 1)

A primary factor recognised by the ELs to have triggered these improvements was that this training generated both a professional and personal development (Table 1). The ELs appreciated the fact that the training offered reflective and

‘learning by doing’ opportunities that could be used both in the professional and personal sphere. Hargreaves and Goodson (1996, p. 7) emphasise that “Teacher development... involves changing the person the teacher is... Acknowledging that teacher development is also a process of personal development marks an important step forward in our improvement efforts”. Lotte Bailyn (1993) denotes that personal development and professional development reinforce one another, and it requires great efforts to maintain them in isolation from each other. It seems that this training has triggered a virtual circular causality whereby professional growth instilled personal development, while personal development reinforced professional growth. The A-R based training seems to have led growth both on a perceptive level, what ELs referred to as *Self-awareness* as well as on a reactive level, that is the acquisition of *Actions and Strategies*. This is in line with Elliot’s (1988) description of A-R; a continual set of spirals consisting of reflection and action.

Table 1. *Professional & Personal Development Theme*

Sub-themes	Key words/codes	Most significant extracts
Self-awareness	Awareness, consciousness, mental traps, scripts, patterns, emotions, rigid beliefs, perceptions, speedy Gonzales, Achilles, fear, guilt, anger, self-sabotage, attempted solutions, boundaries, taking work home, work, time-outs	<p>Head 1: <i>“This type of training helps professional but also the personal growth of the EL... cause if you do not grow on a personal level you will not grow professionally.”</i></p> <p>Head 2: <i>“I became aware of my fears, fear is my most dominant emotion during a dialogue...”</i></p>
Actions & acquired strategies	Pacing, urgency, mountain-climbing, go slow, time-outs, scheduling, focus oriented, prioritization, multi-tasking, priorities, saying no, time-outs delegation, one-man show to rely on emotional distancing, log books, writing	<p>Head 3: <i>“As leaders we need to have various resources and this became another resource that is resulting to be very helpful”</i></p>

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Continuous development	CPD, on-going training, engaging, passionate, extension, EU funding, self-tuition, deepening reading and knowledge	Head 1: <i>“Training should be continuous and accompany us EL through our career, not just a year. (CPD) This type of action research training process should accompany us from when we get enrolled and throughout our mission... help us find a moment to reflect, share.”</i>
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This A-R based training seems to have instigated a shared interest in continuous development. Even though they assert that their profession takes a lot of their time, they are now aware of the need to invest time in the CPD. Commitment and motivation are fundamental aspects for effective continuous personal development, and training should be designed to elicit (Moswelsa, 2006) and keep alive these aspects. Bezzina (2002) affirms that CPD can only be effective if it is ongoing in order to support them through the rapidly changing educational system.

Training should bridge theory to practice (Table 2).

ELs affirmed that they committed themselves to this one-year long training because it was relevant and contextual, and allowed them to be active and operative protagonists of the learning process. It also held a rigorous but not a rigid process which was adaptable and transferable to various situations and produced tangible and effective results. This is in line with Lee (2005) who states that successful professional development should be sustained over a period of time, should be needs-based, embedded in daily practice, and tailored to meet the specific circumstances or contexts of the participants. These are all aspects experienced by the ELs during this experience induced by the combination of the flexible constructivist-strategic approach to A-R process used both in training and in their practice. Robertson (2004) affirms that only when practice moves to praxis, does a learning process provide real opportunities for improvement and, in turn, enhance professionalism.

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Table 2. *Praxis Theme*

Sub-Themes	Codes/key words	Most significant excerpts
Contextual & Relevant	Relevant, Site-based, not theory	Head 4: <i>“Very useful to our practice because it’s contextual. I knew action-research but now I am using it in my practice...”</i>
Active & Operative	Knowing through changing, experimental, learning by doing, tangible, in-action	Head 5: <i>“...We were all active subjects. It leads you to experiment in person, to be the protagonist of the process and not a spectator or a container to be filled with information... we were all active subjects”</i>
Rigorous but not rigid	Constructivist-strategic approach, rigour, credible, guidelines, measureable, no one-way solutions	Head 5: <i>“...It was a compromise between flexibility and rigour”</i>
Adaptable & Transferable	Flexible, no-one-fits-all solutions, no rigid receipts, ad hoc, tailor made onto the different situations, instruments passed on to others, used with others, staff, friends even home	Head 4: <i>“What you did with us, shared with us is a model which can be applied to our specific and particular situation”</i> Head 3: <i>“Even in the action-plans we are working and implementing at school,</i>

		<i>we need to break them down into small steps... I am passing on this method to my staff.. even in planning our school curriculum”</i>
Effective	Observed tangible results, credible, effects	Head 1: <i>“In these months I witnessed with my own eyes that what I’ve learnt during the training works!”</i>

Critical reflection.

Another factor that seems to have helped ELs improve their PS and C competence is critical reflection (Table 3). This is a key aspect of A-R. Webster-Wright (2009) suggests a focus on learning with a shift of emphasis from passive development to active learning. The A-R based training provided various opportunities to bring ELs to undertake self and collective reflection. The training offered opportunities to allow the ELs to become practitioner researchers (Dana, 2009), where they would actively and systematically look and reflect on what is going on in their practice. The training provided both scheduled (prescribed tasks, home work and final presentation) and unscheduled opportunities (log books, diaries) to aid the EL to self -reflect on their practice. ELs declared that they recognised the potential of self-reflection in improving both

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their PS and C competencies yet they only carried it out when it was scheduled and guided. The training also provided opportunities for collective reflections which were scheduled (learning community sessions) and unscheduled (partnership coaching and virtual platform). Even though ELs recognised the potential of collective reflections carried out during partnership coaching sessions or via the virtual platform, they failed to commit themselves to these suggested practices.

Table 3. *Critical Reflection Theme*

Sub-themes	Key words/codes	Most significant excerpt
<p>SELF</p> <p>STRUCTURED-SCHEDULED</p> <p>SELF-REFLECTIONS</p> <p>HOMEWORK</p> <p>FINAL PRESENTATION</p>	<p>Reflection, stop, think, Personal development, Professional development, diaries, logs, emotions, time-outs, progress, compulsory, flexible</p>	<p>Head 4: <i>“I liked the structured tasks and found them very useful... it is important that you gave us tasks even to evaluate certain things... can’t be left out in such type of training. We are busy people and we need (gesture to write) mandatory homework (smiled)!”</i></p>

<p>NON-SCHEDULED SELF- REFLECTIONS</p>	<p>Log books, diaries, emotions, fears, distancing, resistances, intimate, time consuming, optional</p>	<p>Head 8: <i>“I use self-reflection and writing even for personal matters, when I needed to take massive decisions... I wrote before deciding... Even before speaking with a parent...”</i></p>
<p>COLLECTIVE REFLECTIONS</p> <p>SCHEDULED: Learning communities</p>	<p>Widened horizons, sharing, challenging, innovations, learning experience, trust, support, guided, facilitator</p>	<p>Head 5: <i>“I prefer to do it (reflecting) in the group, where I often shared my cases, and analyse with others, have feedback... Reflect after something takes place when you are not emotionally involved... It helps you put things into focus and see things which you would otherwise, for some reason or the other, you don’t see”</i></p>

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<p>NON-SCHEDULED Partnership coaching, virtual platform</p>	<p>Non-scheduled, partnership coaching, virtual platform, trust, support, IT illiterate, mandatory, partnership caching, virtual platform, facebook, social networks</p>	<p>Head 6: <i>“I believe it failed due to the instrument used... Facebook... It should have a more professional outfit and needs to be structured and immediate like Nudol... It is important to get to know members of the community before hand... If I knew them probably even Facebook might have worked”</i></p>
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Interdependence.

This study has shown that participating ELs perceive interdependence as a key factor of this training experience (Table 4). It offered various opportunities to move from isolation to a sense of supportive community. This is in line with various research studies, which emphasise the need for CPD to include learning communities (Dana 2009; Flinders, 1988; Lieberman & Miller, 1992; Lortie, 1975; Smith & Scott, 1990). A sense of trust seemed to have been built along the training-research experience with the other members of the learning community and even with the trainer/facilitator. Robertson (2008) affirms that a climate of trust and

professionalism is essential to create learning communities and eventually a genuine learning process. Establishing trust in relationships seems to be an asset to bring the ELs to disclose and share their works and difficulties. ELs affirmed that learning communities developed because a trusting relationship was built along the way with the other participants but also with the trainer-facilitator. However, partnership coaching and virtual platforms did not develop adequately because very little time and effort was invested to allow a trusting relationship to flourish. Roberston (2008) affirmed that with time participants become more open with each other in direct relationship to the degree of trust engendered but trainers/coaches should not stand still, and should help to facilitate and stimulate this essential aspect.

This training helped ELs widen their horizons. Argyris (1999) affirms that effective professional development should create the essential conditions for “double-loop learning” which takes place when learners invite other people to observe or reflect on their actions thereby providing the catalyst that allows the learners to confront the views and perceptions that seem to be influencing their (re)actions. This is why collective reflections and thus outside perspectives are necessarily at the core of the leadership learning process. Webber and Robertson

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(1998) affirm that effective learning experiences should open up the ELs to diverse perspectives to move them beyond the self to a bigger, more critical perspective of their own practice and also on to educational leadership in general. Staff mobility and other experiences in different educational contexts are fundamental to widen the horizons. Giroux (1992) calls this crossing over ‘border pedagogy’.

Another factor that ELs recognise to have brought improvement both in their PS and C competencies was vicarious learning. Robertson (2002) affirms that effective learning experiences should help close the gap between espoused theories and theories in action, and training which prevails vicarious learning seems to reach this goal more effectively and efficiently.

Most ELs affirmed that they have already started sharing their operative knowledge with others. Robertson (2002) states that once leaders have learnt new skills, they often feel the urge to teach and/or coach other colleagues, triggering a sort of cascade effect. Training seems to be enhanced if it incorporates interdependent experiences through the inclusion of learning communities, partnership coaching, virtual platforms and staff mobility opportunities to help the same participants gain benefits from widening their horizons. This

also instils a feeling of interdependence which ELs can then divulge within their school systems

Table 4. *Interdependence Theme*

Sub-Theme	Key words/codes	Most significant excerpt
Supportive communities	Isolation acknowledgement validation, same boat, solidarity, collegiality	Head 5: “... <i>especially in our profession where we are very isolated... the group contains us... it is a moment that gave me great strength and support to face my school problems</i> ”
Trusting relationships	Disclosure, sharing, challenging, confidentiality, without judgement, impression management, learning community vis-à-vis, partnership coaching, virtual platforms, trainer	Head 9: “ <i>What I liked best was that we shared openly and sincerely without hesitation or fear of judgement... this trust was felt in all the group</i> ”
Widened horizons	Different points of views and ideas: Learning community partnership coaching staff mobility, school visits	Head 2: “ <i>I enjoyed meeting the Maltese EL in person and see another reality... the fact that we did school visits one could see the good and bad of that reality.. what you can</i>

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		<i>take up and use in your school... but also meeting them and get to know them was important for me”</i>
Vicarious learning	Learning from others & observations, partnership coaching, learning community, final presentations	Head 2: “...during the training I saw that my other colleagues managed to say no.. I am learning to say no but it is not easy for me”
Sharing learnt knowledge	Ripple effect, coaching others, pass on instruments, transferability	Head 4: “I am sharing with my staff, I carried out small training sessions on resistance to change... in this way I can hand over to them the acquired instruments...”

Relationship management.

The data suggests that Continuous Professional Development should help ELs integrate the human aspect into their administrative practice. Goodland (1978) stated that very little training is tailored to help ELs interweave these two aspects of leadership – the administrative and human aspect, even though they are made to take responsibility and manage both of them successfully. Often ELs follow managerial theories, focus on the content (message, project, idea, input-output) and not on the

relationships, and this often sabotages both their PS and C. ELs affirmed that an imperative aspect of training should be to take up relationship management (Table 5). Besides having a vision, leaders must be able to use persuasive skills to persuade others to collaborate towards the desired goal (Balbi & Artini, 2009). This A-R based training gave the participating ELs operative tools to better their active listening, by attending to verbal and non-verbal cues and other communication strategies which turn their dialogues into co-joint, win-win discoveries (Nardone & Salvini, 2007). Even in communication, an A-R approach helps in learning how to correct and guide our communicative interventions to establish collaborative relationships (Papantuono et al., 2014). Another important aspect that helped ELs improve their PS and C competences seemed to be the operative knowledge and instruments acquired so as to turn resistances into collaborations. Often ELs fear resistances and dissent, but getting to know the different resistances to change helped them to manage these better. Effective leaders need to be able to handle their relationship interactions in a fluid way, depending on the situation. Geddes (1995) stated that effective communication and thus successful leadership entails a developed flexibility or active positioning (i.e. the ability to calibrate and balance one's power according to the specific

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situation). An effective leader should be capable of taking up a one-down or one-up position and establish a complimentary or symmetrical relationship according to the specific situation. Thus the awareness gathered from the training regarding the Pragmatics of Human Communication (Balbi & Artini, 2009; Papantuono et al., 2014; Watzlawick, Weakland & Fisch, 1974) combined with an A-R approach to communication, helped the participating ELs to improve their communication competences and indirectly improve their leadership skills in general.

Table 5. Relationship Management Theme

Sub-Theme	Key words/codes	Most significant excerpt
Human aspect	Not just an administrator, relationship, leader vs manager, educators, care for our students' needs, no time	Head 1: <i>"Our work is multi-tasking... We have to manage so much administrative work that we lose the human aspect.. others and ourselves"</i>
Active listening	Redundant words, non-verbal observation anthropologist, body language, hidden cues, our own on non verbals, emotions	Head 7: <i>"...the importance of listening, active listening even their non-verbal...rather than you blutter and blutter, various tips are given, the way we communicate, our own verbal and non-verbal... that helped me a lot"</i>

<p>Communication strategies</p>	<p>Persuasion, tag along others, engaging others, planned, use strategies, paraphrasing, questions with illusion of alternative, analogies, joint discovery</p>	<p>Head 10: <i>“It made me see communication under a different light.. I had a sort of prejudice towards those who worked on bettering their communication... while I discovered how important it is to give space and work on the dialogue.. it helped me give the right value to communication... Maybe it is the most important aspect”</i></p>
<p>Turn resistances into collaborations</p>	<p>Fear resistances, dissent, resistances, oppositional, anthropologist exercise, martial arts, strength</p>	<p>Head 11: <i>“I believe that if it wasn’t for this course I wouldn’t have held my role of head of school or I would asked for clerical work for now, for the problem I had with my assistant head, they were the skills that you have given me that put me back in a position that we can continue working together”</i></p>
<p>Active positioning</p>	<p>Flexibility, symmetrical and complementary, one-down, up-down, say no, too much empathy</p>	<p>Head 1: <i>“Good leaders need to be able to be flexible and take up different positioning... be able to take one-down or/and one-up positions according to the situation”</i></p>

Sense of control.

This training programme generated a generalised sense of control in participating ELs (Table 6). The active aspect of the A-R process employed both in their PS and C, seem to have induced a significant sense of ownership, agency and self-efficacy. Costa and Garmston (2015) affirm that a state of self-efficacy enables learners to feel confident enough to take risks. They feel empowered to try out alternative actions and venture out of their comfort zones. Having a rigorous but not rigid process to follow seems to instil confidence in their practice. The A-R process generated a self-corrected attitude, which seems to have led them towards craftsmanship and mastery both in PS and C. It is important to state that training should anticipate and be able to guide ELs through the initial phase of the A-R process, where participants feel very much disoriented and confused. Robertson (2002) states that, sometimes, leaders situated within a challenging environment initially experience a sense of loss and lack of confidence, especially in the learning processes that follow an action research methodology. Fullan (2001) calls this an implementation dip. Yet if the learning process takes account of this and guides its participants through the 'foggy moments', this implementation dip or the sense of loss and lack of confidence, can act as a

catalyst for change because it creates a disruption by nudging leaders out of their comfort zones, to challenge them to look at their actions, try out new, small actions and reflect on their effects so as to inform their next action, and then the next.

Table 6. *Exercise of Control Theme*

Theme	Keywords	Excerpt
Ownership	Helplessness, not luck but own merit, charisma to competence, casually planned situations	Head 9: <i>“I know what I need to do, how to operate... just like my Gozitan colleague I know it is not due to luck... can't be lucky every time, right?”</i>
Agency & Self-efficacy	From victim to agent of school change, control, strategies, results, operative tools, acknowledge progress	Head 11: <i>“This situation is under control and all is working very well and I am seeing with my own eyes not only tried and tested... but also witnessed by the principle”</i>
Empowerment	Confidence, in control, risk-taking, creating momentum	Head 4: <i>“I feel more empowered... you have given me a momentum that helped”</i>

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Mastery	Craftsmanship, precision, elegance, self-correction, unconscious competence, second nature	Head 8: “ <i>Even with communication I need to continue transforming my weaknesses into strengths</i> ”
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The empowering sensation elicited during the training programme seems to have triggered this in the participating ELs. An A-R research approach to training and practice brings the ELs to feel like agents of change, yet this requires time and commitment. That is why A-R training cannot be carried out in short seminars or in 3-day programmes. In-service training (Bezzina, 2002) should be an on-going learning experience that accompanies the ELs in their missions, even if it limits itself to monthly meetings.

CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to listen and learn from the voices of the ELs to understand how training has brought about a change in their perceptions, beliefs, assumptions, beliefs and actions to enhance their self-efficacy, as a result of a complex interaction of factors experienced during this A-R based training experience. The study shows that the specific aspects of the A-

R approach used in this training were considered by the ELs to have improved their self-efficacy. *Praxis* is placed at heart of effective training. This research-training experience was regarded as: contextual and relevant, active and operative, rigorous but not rigid, adaptable and transferable, and effective. *Critical reflections* were considered cardinal for these improvements but the study indicates that training should schedule and guide these reflective opportunities so as to bring out their full potential. The findings shows that this A-R based training is a *mutually interdependent experience*. Supportive communities, trustful relationships, widened horizons, vicarious learning and shared learnt knowledge are the factors that set the ground for effective training. Another emerging theme was *relationship management*, i.e. the importance for training to address the human aspect of this profession, generate active listening, convey communication strategies, help ELs manage resistances to turn them into collaborations and develop active positioning. This chapter also demonstrated that this training programme generated a sense of ownership, agency and self-efficacy, empowerment and also mastery. This one-year A-R based training seems to have brought ELs closer to an unconscious competence level both in PS and C. Finally, this chapter presented recommendations gathered from the

narratives of the participating ELs in improving this type of A-R based training. However it is imperative to state that this research does not hold the ambitious objective of defining what makes training effective but aims to highlight and underline some ideas to reflect upon when designing development training programmes, so as to help ELs improve their sense of self-efficacy and exercise their multi-tasking role effectively, which is essential for school improvement.

An A-R approach to training is challenging but rewarding. As Dana (2009) states, taking up an A-R approach to training is at first like entering uncharted territory, which can be quite disarming at the beginning of the journey. ELs might feel disoriented since they are unfamiliar with both the terrain and the final destination. An A-R approach to training helps the EL to chart his/her own territory. Exploring the unknown land and defining landmarks can be intriguing, experimental, exciting and rewarding over time. However the A-R approach is not something that ELs can read or acquire from books. It is a process that needs to be guided, supported and reinforced, even by the presence of others whom ELs trust, respect and even admire. It is a journey that an EL can take off on his/her own but which can be more enriching if he/she takes on board other companions.

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**A REVIEW OF THE STAFF SHARING SCHEME IN
PRACTICE WITH ADAPTATIONS FOR THE
CURRENT CLIMATE
STACY MOORE AND MICHAEL ANNAN**

INTRODUCTION

The Staff Sharing Scheme (SSS) in its original form (Gill & Mosen, 1995, 1996), and a subsequent revision (Bruck, Herschberg & Kelly, 2006), is a problem-solving approach aimed at helping teaching and support staff become more effective in managing a range of challenging behaviours presented by some of the pupils with whom they work. It was established as a system for Educational Psychologists (EPs) to work more effectively with a large number of referrals regarding children's behaviour by empowering teachers to feel greater confidence in managing their own behaviour and that of children. The aim was to provide staff with a conceptual framework and practical skills to reflect on and plan for children's difficulties.

The original SSS consisted of three phases, namely assessment of the school processes for managing challenging behaviour via a needs analysis, a questionnaire to the staff team and use of Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland & Scholes, 1990) to conceptualise the context of the problem situation: ten

2-hour staff training sessions where staff learnt how to use behavioural observation and analysis techniques and formulate behavioural interventions; and the implementation of the operational model, initially facilitated by the EP. Over time the group elects a Lead practitioner and the EP becomes a content resource and receives direction for their working input for the school through this forum.

The revision of the SSS (Bruck, et al., 2006) aimed to place greater emphasis on the use of the model for group supervision and problem solving, by creating a space and framework for more objective discussion of problem situations. Within this revised model, much of the training aspect was omitted. The model instead addressed the potential difficulties with interprofessional group dynamics and decision making by drawing on ideas from systems thinking (e.g. encouraging equality of contributions; avoiding the tendency to defer to authority figures in the group; discouraging reductionist discussion; overcoming difficulties in staff ability to analyse and integrate presented information) (Bartolo, 2001; Hamil & Boyd, 2001; Ysseldyke, Algozzine, Richey & Graden, 1982). The emphasis was on the need for group members to have an opportunity to contribute to the process of clarification and reflection on a problem situation, prior to theorising and action planning. The model addressed aspects of teachers' well-being

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by allowing them to reflect with colleagues on an identified problem, consider the range of contributory factors including those at a class and school level and then devise an action plan.

The revised approach was a featured intervention within the Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) Pathfinder Project (Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF), 2008). TaMHS was an approach that sought to first locally and then nationally transform the way that support for emotional well-being and mental health was delivered to children and young people aged 5 to 13 and their families. The aim was to bring together the effective work that schools were already doing to build social and emotional skills and the clinical and therapeutic expertise available through the range of child and adolescent mental health services that worked alongside the school (effectively the ‘Team Around the School’). The Staff Sharing scheme was one of many interventions utilised by the authors to achieve these aims. Through its increasing use in the Pathfinder schools, and opportunities for shared reflections on its use between the authors and colleagues, gradual variations and adaptations emerged (Annan & Moore, 2012).

Despite few recent research studies utilising the model, Staff Sharing continues to feature as a useful group based, peer support approach for EPs in schools, particularly to support

students presenting with social, emotional and mental health (SEMH) needs and the emotional health and well-being of staff. Following its use in a case study design research project, the SSS use has been described as effectively promoting positive teacher behaviour changes in the classroom (Jones, Monsen & Franey, 2013). Identified constraints to its success as an intervention included the time available and the expectations of trust between the group members.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the authors' process of developing the model from the original; to outline the psychological approaches underpinning Staff Sharing; and to reflect upon the themes raised in the meta-evaluative feedback from school staff. A discussion is provided to explore the potential for further iterations of the working model and the impact that may have on teacher wellbeing.

Establishing an Evidence Base.

Through a literature search on the theme of 'teacher wellbeing', evidence was found to promote the upskilling of school practitioners and the support of their values and pedagogy to increase their confidence in working with children who present with challenging behaviour (e.g. Lovat, 2010). The development of teacher resilience and self-efficacy was

understood as a mechanism to more effectively manage situations that traditionally increase teacher stress.

Another body of research indicated student and teacher perceptions of high-quality classroom interactions as a source of positive staff wellbeing (Roffey, 2016; Spilt, Koomen & Thijs, 2011; van Petegem, Aelterman, Rosseel, Creemers, 2007). Further, staff developing more functional relationships with students was thought to lead to more positive student wellbeing (Marzano, Marzano & Pickering, 2003; Werner & Smith, 1992). Additional benefits of developing staff wellbeing were in stimulating stability in the organization, which in turn increased output and retention of staff longer term (avoiding teacher burnout and disillusionment) (Roffey, 2012).

Although it is acknowledged that many interventions that aim to support teachers in their practice and increase self-efficacy may indirectly improve their well-being through reducing the level of concern experienced by the practitioner about specific issues (e.g. Vesely, Saklofske, & Leschied, 2013), the absence of teacher supervision and increasing pedagogical scrutiny and monitoring processes (e.g. Ofsted and performance related pay) ensures that teacher stress continues to be a regularly reported issue (e.g. Marley, 2009; Education Support Partnership, 2018). Where teachers were able to experience positive affect following stressful situations, the

following conditions appear to be positively correlated (i.e. potentially buffer against negative affect/distress) (Mujtaba, 2012): a sense of competence, belonging and autonomy; objective views of situations rather than extreme optimism or pessimism; development of resilience through the use of positive psychology; and positive subjective work experiences in the workplace.

Research also suggests the inclusive benefits of using systemic approaches in addressing the challenging behaviour presented by students, rather than apportioning problem solving responsibilities to individual members of staff (e.g. Baxter & Frederickson, 2005; Cooper & Upton, 1991; Gill & Monsen, 1995, 1996; Hamill & Boyd, 2001; Hanco, 1995; Roffey, 2016; Stringer, Stow, Hibbert, Powell & Louw, 1992).

The DCSF (2008) recommended that in relation to managing pupil behaviour, ‘a staff culture which is comfortable with looking at a child as a member of both school system and a family system, can work with the tensions that might arise from this (particularly when other agencies are involved) and can put a “problem-solving approach’ in place” (p.32). This mirrors Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) conceptualisation of the interacting environments in which behaviour takes place, and supports the usefulness of a systemic, objective approach to analysis and intervention. A group support system would help

to keep the view of the problematic situation as objective as possible, exploring the credence of narratives, while developing the competence and confidence of the team.

The rationale was therefore established for an approach that viewed behaviour as systemic in origin, built confidence and competence in a staff team and invited a more robust relationship to be developed with a student with presenting SEMH needs.

Selecting staff sharing from other group support approaches.

A review of four staff support approaches provided an opportunity to ensure the selection of an approach that was suitably informed by evidence (Bennett & Mosen, 2011). Despite limited empirical evidence for the efficacy of the models reviewed, two approaches - Collaborative Problem-Solving Groups (Hanko, 1999) and Staff Sharing (Gill & Mosen, 1995; 1996) – appeared to have the greatest face validity in application to school staff support (Bennett & Mosen, 2011).

Group consultation, and Staff Sharing in particular, provided an opportunity for EPs to take up a slightly different position with the schools' senior leadership teams and thus challenge traditional perspectives on EP service delivery and reactive approaches to challenging behaviour. Additionally, it

enabled problem behaviour to be publicly positioned externally from the child/young person and the key worker; and for staff to learn to use a model of problem solving that they could subsequently apply in their thinking about future problem situations (contributing to workforce skills development). Through the Staff Sharing model, support was provided for the school team in constructing contextually-meaningful and objective understanding of problem dimensions (conceptual categories defined as aspects of the problem situation identified through the process of information gathering that are cause for concern (Monsen & Frederickson, 2008)).

Re-conceptualising the Staff Sharing Model.

Before being rolled out to TaMHS Pathfinder schools, the revised Staff Sharing model (Bruck, et al., 2006) was further adapted by the authors to promote its use within the current context and climate. The following explicit changes were made:

- The training sessions were fully omitted but a needs analysis undertaken (often within a multiagency planning meeting) to determine the current CPD strengths, needs and plan;
- Rather than acting as a standard member of the team or an expert, the EP took the responsibility of managing

the *process* of information exchange (Schein, 1988). Farouk (2004) suggested that EPs should be able to ‘focus on the group staying on-task, while maintaining the group’s emotional well-being and ability to function’, thereby carrying out ‘task functions’ and ‘maintenance functions’ (p.212). The former of these two functions, according to Schein (1988) refers to the use of the facilitator’s interpersonal and communication skills in order to seek information, give an opinion, clarify, summarise and test consensuses. The latter refers to how the facilitator addresses the interpersonal relationships between group members, encouraging quieter staff members, including newcomers while minimising disruption to the group dynamics, standard setting and standard testing. Additionally, Farouk (2004) suggested that ‘modelling’ these techniques is a useful way for the facilitator to support the group in using a new approach (and also provides an alternative to ‘training’).

- The authors acknowledge the impact of school culture and group dynamics on the efficacy of staff group intervention (Farouk, 2004). It was possible to encourage all members of the Staff Sharing team to reposition themselves as problem ‘solvers’ as well as

problem ‘owners’ (Hanko, 2002) by modelling this position, expecting staff to ask clarifying and reflective questions, and generate hypotheses and interventions. This challenged the idea that only those with decision-making power in the group were able to affect change. Again, it served as an experiential learning component, in the absence of standalone training sessions.

Psychological processes underpinning the current Staff Sharing model.

Despite limited face validity of the model in its entirety, the psychological approaches that belie the model are evidence-based, and therefore lend further weight to its use. The process of the Staff Sharing sessions drew on a number of psychological approaches. These included:

- Systemic Consultation: emanating from family therapy, this approach to consulting with staff allows observation of connections that create patterns, leading to interpretations, meaning and narratives (Burnham, 1992; Carr, 2016).
- Reflecting/reflexive questioning (e.g. Andersen, 1987): by their use the process elicited new cognitions and narratives in a semi-independent manner as the

staff themselves determined the unique direction of the discussion.

- Solution-focused thinking (SFT) and target monitoring evaluation (TME) (e.g. Dunsmuir, Brown, Iyadurai & Monsen, 2009): use of questions that elicited exceptions, strengths, best hopes, and interventions that had previously seen successful outcomes, positioned the situation as one that could improve; while the use of ratings pre- and post- intervention, encouraged staff to reflect on their subjective views within the context of the entire ‘case’.
- The Interactive Factors Framework (IFF):
 - The IFF (Morton & Frith, 1995; Monsen & Frederickson, 2008; Frederickson & Cline, 2002) was used as a structure to record the information being presented in the staff sharing meetings and had the effect of introducing a new way of organising and conceptualising the difficulties (see Figure 1). The IFF is based on the work of Morton and Frith (1995) who acknowledged that the model could be used to map out a wide range of information, from a wide range of sources presented by individuals within a variety of

environments. Three overarching purposes appear to be served:

i. to outline the key areas of need (biological, cognitive, affective/emotional, behavioural and environmental) without prioritising the behavioural;

ii. generating working hypotheses of how factors may impact on each other; and

iii. testing out hypotheses through the strategic introduction of interventions at specific levels.

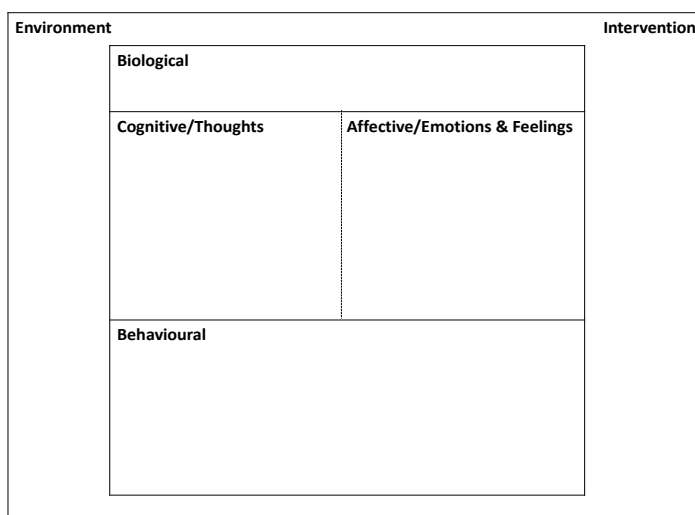


Figure 1. A visual representation of the Interactive Factors Framework (IFF) (based on Morton & Frith, 1995)

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The authors added the idea of protective factors or strengths to the IFF, which were recorded in a different colour from the presenting issues, challenges or difficulties and the term 'intervention' rather than 'management' was used on the right-hand side of the IFF to record the interventions that were already in place.

The operational model of delivery.

Details of the original model of delivery (Gill & Monsen, 1995; 1996) and changes proposed by the authors can be read in the original paper (Annan & Moore, 2012). The following is the current working model of Staff Sharing delivery:

1. Case Presentation (10 minutes): The person presenting the case (the Consultee) speaks uninterruptedly about a particular issue. Importantly, the person who brings and owns the problem is heard by the group and actively listened to, taking into account the idea that information not already held in common is less likely to be sought (Stasser, Vaughan & Stewart, 2000). The IFF was used as a structure to record the information being presented.

The consultee then rates their level of concern regarding the issue on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 being the greatest concern and 10 no concern at all). At this stage the emphasis is

on identifying and examining what the difficulty is, rather than on offering possible solutions.

2. Group Questioning (10 minutes): The other members of the group are able to ask the following in order to elicit further detail on the presenting issue:

- Clarifying questions – e.g. Who? What? Where? When? How often?

- Reflexive/reflecting questions – e.g. What was different? What do you think the child/young person may be gaining from this behaviour? What is/are your response/others' responses to this behaviour and what influence is this having on the situation? If X were here what would they say about it? When are the times when the problem is less evident/easier to manage?

Using reflexive/reflecting questions has the potential to invite the person presenting the issue to take up a different 'position' in relation to that issue or problem (Harré & van Langenhove, 1999) and the consultee would be better equipped to entertain different perspectives on the problem situation which may create the possibility for different actions by themselves or others, including the pupil.

3. Case Presentation Pt 2 (10 minutes): The EP asks the consultee to reflect on what she/he has heard to further develop the case conceptualisation represented by the IFF.

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4. Hypotheses and Interventions (10 minutes): The EP (consultant) and consultee listen while each person in the Reflecting Team shares a hypothesis and associated intervention aimed at addressing the issue. This allows individuals to share their perspectives in a way that Diehl and Stroebe (1991) suggest, is more efficient than group 'brainstorming'. Bruck, et al. (2006) also emphasise the importance of allowing for structured interaction (Paulus, 2000) and an explanation of reasoning since the verbalisation of a viewpoint increases one's own comprehension and retention (Pilkington & Parker-Jones, 1996).

5. Action Planning (10 minutes): The EP and consultee continue the conversation but this time focusing on the selection of interventions that seem useful. Time is spent devising an action plan, which includes consideration of the consequences of particular interventions and the exploration of the practicalities of given options. This action plan is recorded in the 'interventions' section of the IFF, often building on some of what has already been recorded (interventions already in place). A rating of the level of concern that would be expected if the plan were fully implemented and successful is sought.

6. Meta Evaluation (10 minutes): At the end of each session the group reflects on the process itself, acknowledges

positive features of the approach and any improvement suggestions.

7. Feedback (10 minutes): In the following session there will be time at the beginning for feedback on how things have progressed and a re-rating of the level of concern. This constitutes the final phase of the TME rating (Dunsmuir, et al., 2009).

The above process (see Figure 3) was developed from the one used within the TaMHS project (see Figure 2) but it acknowledged and sought to address:

- the difficulties modelling differences in the types of questions (clarifying and reflexive/reflecting) in the allocated time and their use;
- difficulty in holding shifts in perspectives as they emerged;
- difficulty in ensuring the hypotheses generated were informed by the analysis of problem dimensions.

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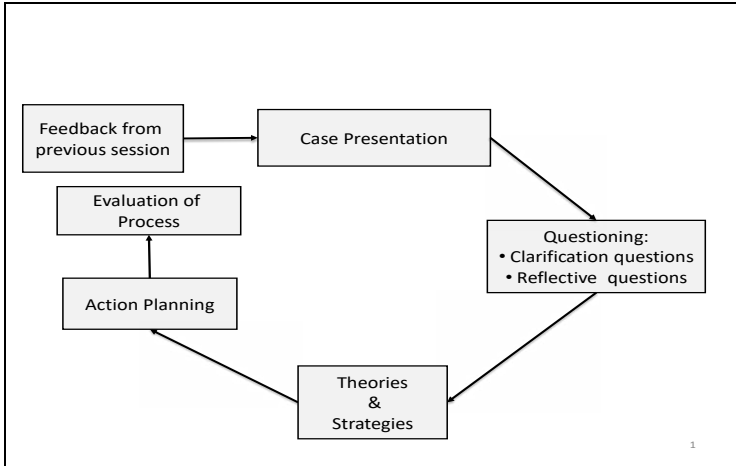


Figure 2. The Staff Sharing Operational Model used in the TaMHS project

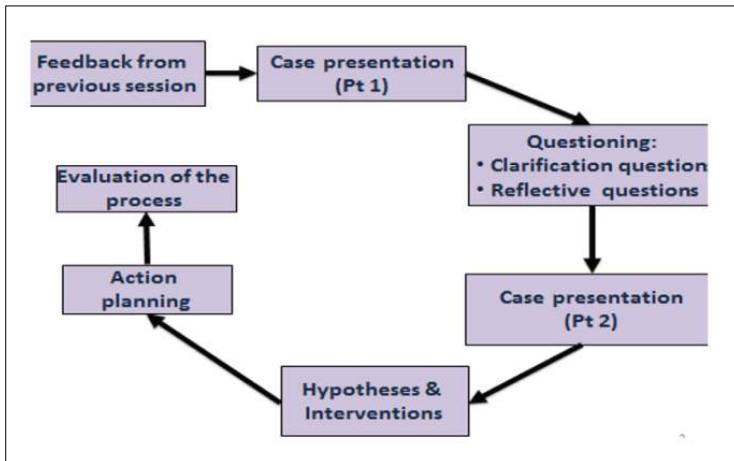


Figure 3. The 2018 revision of the Staff Sharing Operational Model

METHODOLOGY

The Staff Sharing approach was used as a means of developing the abilities and strengths of the staff group to work together to analyse and reflect upon difficult issues in the process of finding solutions. The intention was also to generalise some of the thinking and aspects of the approach to other problems and issues that arose in and around the school/organisation. The model was intended to prevent premature consideration of solutions and instead promoted a staged approach moving through problem description to analysis, reflection, theorising and action planning. Part of the intention was to address the issue of staff well being and in doing so acknowledged the limited amount of supervision and support in place for teachers and school staff.

During the TaMHS project 17 Staff Sharing problem-solving discussions were carried out by one or both EPs. Schools that were part of the TaMHS project began each term with a Multi-Agency Planning (MAP) meeting and it was in this forum that the Staff Sharing intervention was usually commissioned. The SENCo or Inclusion Manager of the school raised Staff Sharing as a Wave 1 (universal/whole school) issue, requesting a set of sessions with staff as a means of supporting group problem solving/peer support, or as students were considered at Wave 2 (mild or moderate needs) or 3 (severe,

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complex or persistent needs) a Staff Sharing session was requested to problem solve a particular case. Staff members were released by senior management to attend the sessions during the school day in some settings, or after school during designated CPD time in others. The commissioning SENCo/inclusion manager attended the sessions and they also decided the relevant members of staff who would attend. The number of sessions commissioned and staff attending was flexible, and often determined by the constraints faced by the school, e.g. availability of staff, competing workforce priorities.

The TaMHS project required outcome data to be collected for all interventions and while initially qualitative feedback was sought through the follow up sessions built into the model, over time, ways of collecting quantitative data demonstrating the impact of the intervention were considered. Ideas from Target, Monitoring and Evaluation (TME; Dunsmuir et al., 2009) and the use of Solution Focused rating scales (e.g. Rhodes & Ajmal, 1995) were drawn upon to gather ratings at three points in time: when the problem was first presented (baseline), once an action plan had been formulated (expected) and then in the follow-up session (achieved).

The qualitative data was drawn from written feedback and comments recorded verbatim by the EPs during the meta-evaluative phase of Staff Sharing sessions, and from

discussions with commissioning SENCOs and inclusion managers during follow up MAP meetings, by way of providing feedback on the impact of the intervention. Analysis of the feedback was undertaken using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS

Considering findings from the 17 Staff Sharing problem-solving discussions that were held during the TaMHS pathfinder project, seven had complete pre- and post-intervention ratings of the level of concern recorded. Of these seven, five reported a reduction in the level of concern regarding the situation at the point of follow up. Additionally, in two cases information from the Staff Sharing discussions was reported to directly contribute to staffing decisions made by senior management and collation of evidence for the child's statutory annual review meeting.

As recommended by the authors in the discussion of the original paper (Annan & Moore, 2012), this chapter is focused more on illustrating the themes arising from the meta-evaluative data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Several themes emerged which were taken from the qualitative data from the TaMHS project and feedback given by staff in subsequent use

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of Staff Sharing in day to day work. Some of the most frequently arising themes are further explored in Table 1.

Table 1. *Themes emerging from the data*

Theme	Explanation
Time and space for staff groups to think about an issue in depth A means of addressing teacher well-being	The creation of a structured, timetabled session for the discussions communicated to staff on the importance placed on their wellbeing and the necessity for a targeted approach to managing challenging behaviour. The communication also focused on the expertise for devising an effective plan that lay within the staff team as experts on the child, rather than with an external professional with limited knowledge of the case. Staff Sharing provided the space and structure to access and utilise their expertise. The traditional hierarchy of school systems is removed in Staff Sharing to be a flatter structure, where team members with traditionally less power (e.g. LSAs) are afforded the same opportunity to share ideas.
Opportunities to share different perspectives	Encouraging divergent thinking is often discouraged in working with behaviour or situations that

	<p>are challenging to organisations, often due to time constraints. Having a framework to place these differing points of view provided a platform for the variety of perspectives to be heard as ‘hypotheses’ rather than ‘truths’. Staff also commented on the ease of reaching a consensus of a narrative, given a shared understanding of the underlying problem dimensions.</p>
<p>Opportunities to think differently about a problem and consider aspects of a case not previously considered or not seen as significant</p>	<p>The use of the IFF encouraged the discussion of all aspects of the child’s presentation (not only the behavioural) with equal weight. The use of reflexive/reflecting questions and a reflecting team approach allowed staff to publicly ‘take up different positions’ in the presented case.</p>
<p>A structure for solving problems that could be applied to other situations that arose</p>	<p>Repeated use of the model over time provided the opportunity for experiential learning, where staff become sufficiently familiar with the model to then apply it in new situations. It was also possible to encourage the use of the approach when situations had improved to model public acknowledgement of improvements.</p>

DISCUSSION

Staff Sharing continues to be used by the EPs in their day-to-day activities in working with schools. Despite some variation in the operational model over time and dependent on context, the inclusion of visual mapping, clarifying and reflecting/reflexive questioning and generating of theories and strategies based on triangulated data has been a consistent feature of the model's use over time. The diversity of school staff represented in Staff Sharing teams, including learning support assistants, heads of year and even at times other external professionals from the Team Around the School, such as the speech and language therapist, suggest the aim of a less hierarchical structure to decision making continues to be achieved by its use. Additionally, it is increasingly recognised as a mechanism for external professionals to gain a broader view of a child's presenting needs and a way for them to contribute their expertise to the process of thinking undertaken by the 'problem-owning' team, rather than in consultation with an individual or via a report.

Collation of meta-evaluative feedback indicates positivity and enthusiasm from staff in using the format to discuss behaviour going forward. Collation of broader qualitative data on the impact on staff wellbeing would be useful to evaluate the details of how this aim was achieved. The

hosting of a post-intervention forum with a team following a block of Staff Sharing sessions may help to further tease out the nuances of the model and why some discussions moved situations on more than others. Undoubtedly, the space created from Staff Sharing is identified as unique, as the behaviour is viewed as only one element of the presenting situation: unlike other behaviour-focused meetings, the biological, cognitive, social, affective and environmental factors are equally prominent features of the discussion. The presentation of these ideas visually on the IFF appears to serve this aim well as all factors and the broader context for the student can be held in mind throughout the process of the discussion.

Quantitative pre- and post-intervention data, while sparse given the evolutionary nature of the use of the model, indicates improvements in the staff reported level of concern. As the use of the 2018 revised model continues, more consistent collation of quantitative data at the three points of the model (pre-meeting; at the end of the meeting and then at the start of the next session) will further indicate the impact.

CONCLUSION

Having considered the application of the Staff Sharing model as a tool in our day to day work with school settings, there is a clear rationale for its continued use and further development in

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the support of staff and student well-being. The approach has provided a vehicle to not only support but also upskill staff in areas that are not traditionally taught within the teacher training programmes, nor in the continuing professional development programme of most schools. These skills include evidence-based information-gathering, visual representation and modelling of problem dimensions, reflective questioning for the purpose of more detailed understanding, hypothesis generation and triangulation and providing support within a team via a facilitatory position/coaching approach. The usefulness of such skills could be considered three-fold:

- 1) Directly supporting the mental health of staff who are provided with a reflective space proactively and regularly.
- 2) Improving the problem-solving capabilities of the team to then improve the team's capacity to internally manage behaviour that challenges going forward.
- 3) Championing the adoption of a meta-position towards behavioural issues within a school system, which in turn may shift the tendency away from punitive consequences as resolutions. i.e. 'an ecological analysis of the dimensions of the problem at the level of child, family, school, community' (Woolfson, Whaling, Stewart & Monsen, 2003, p. 293).

Further considerations that still remain are how to include the voice of the child and family, how we may most effectively measure staff wellbeing and the construction of a universal training phase to standardise the approach somewhat.

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