Exploring the role of resilience in the first practicum of trainee ELT teachers

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Effective language teaching involves spreading enthusiasm to encourage learning, yet it is often accompanied by significant challenges, including disruptive learner behaviour, inadequate institutional support, and organisational uncertainty, all of which might contribute to high stress levels, generate conflict, and ultimately lead to unsatisfactory learning outcomes and potentially compromise the mental health of teachers. Against this background, the construct of teacher resilience, defined as the teachers’ ability to cope in the face of challenging circumstances, is gaining increasing theoretical and empirical currency. Current conceptualisations of resilience view it as a relational construct that connects psychological traits and contextual influences, but there is presently a dearth of empirical data examining how resilience is deployed in actual teaching. This presentation aims to add to our understanding of resilience by looking into how trainee English language teachers drew on their resilience to cope with the challenges of their first practicum. I will begin with a theoretical overview of the construct of resilience, which is used to frame the ensuing empirical discussion. Next, I will present a small-scale mixed-methods study that investigated resilience among undergraduate students in a teacher training course, and the way in which their resilience influenced their experiences of their first practicum. A questionnaire survey was used to establish the participants’ resilience levels, to probe whether resilience was associated with demographic factors, and to provide insights into possible latent traits associated with this psychological construct. Following that, the trainee teachers were interviewed regarding their practicum, and comparisons were made between the data provided by participants with differing levels of resilience. After presenting a selection of quantitative and qualitative data from the study, I will conclude by discussing implications for teacher education.

Keywords: teacher psychology, resilience, trainee teachers.