

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RESILIENCE IN THE GENERAL CONTEXT OF WELL-BEING IN THE ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

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Abstract

The paper addresses a current issue in the context of the pandemic caused by COVID-19, the one of developing the transversal competence of psychological resilience in close correlation with the achievement of well-being by students and professors. The objectives of the paper are: the conceptual clarifications of the psychological resilience and well-being; the presentation of the main theoretical contributions related to the psychological resilience; the directions of educational action in order to develop resilience in the university environment. The pandemic determined by COVID-19 - has made all the people of the planet- face problems they have never known. We insist on the negative implications from a psychological point of view. The word "resilience" was not often used before 1984. In the 1980s, the vulnerability concept dominated. Researchers first analyzed the study of vulnerability, fragility factors or vulnerability in order to study suffering. The word "resilience" comes from Latin: *resilire*, *resalire* or *resilio*. It means taking a step back, jumping, restarting, having a rebound. In the Middle Ages, the word "resilience" meant to free oneself, to release oneself.

Key words: psychological resilience, well-being, resilience, resilience development program, students and teachers

The term resilience was not often used before 1984. In the 1980s, the concept of vulnerability dominated (Cyrulnik *et al*, 2001). Researchers first looked at the study of vulnerability, fragility factors or vulnerability to study suffering (Anaut, 2003).

The term "resilience" comes from Latin: *resilire*, *resalire* or *resilio*. It means taking a step back, jumping, restarting, having a rebound (Therrien, 2010; Michallet, 2010). In the Middle Ages, the term resilience meant to free oneself, to be released (Michallet, 2010).

In English, "resilience" means to restart, to jump back, "to take a step back to jump better", to recover, to recover, to adapt (Michallet, 2010: 10-11; Dyer and Mc Guinness, 1996; Cyrulnik and Jorland, 2012). The American Heritage Dictionary (1994) defined it as the ability to recover quickly from illness, change, or misfortune. (Dyer & Mc Guinness, 1996). It is also associated with the term coping (Cyrulnik *et al*, 2001: 46).

The concept of "resilience" is used in metallurgy and means the ability of steel to return to its original shape after being struck. By referring to humans, resilience is associated especially not only with his ability to recover, but also to gain strength from disaster (Petrova-Dimitrova N., 2017).

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The objectives of the paper are: the conceptual clarifications of the psychological resilience and well-being; the presentation of the main theoretical contributions related to psychological resilience; the directions of educational action in order to develop resilience in the university environment.

The concept of well-being has been known since 1561 and it means "the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous: WELFARE" (*Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*). "Well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person." (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017 Edition). It is interesting to note that the concept of Danish culture is well described by "hygge" (Brits, L., 2017), and the Swedish one as "lagom" (Akerström L., 2017).

Research on well-being has grown more and more in recent years. Experts in the field noted the absence of coherent definitions of the concept (Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Forgeard & *all.*, 2011) (*apud* Dodge & *al.*, 2012). The research argues the influence of the teacher's well-being on the student's well-being and the improvement of an intrinsic motivation for learning (Patrick, Hisley & Kempster, 2000).

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RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

We will briefly present some concepts about the psychological resilience.

Emmy Werner was one of the first scientists to study psychological resilience. In 1970, Emmy Werner published a study of children in Kauai, Hawaii. The subjects in this study grew up with alcoholic parents or parents with severe mental disorders. One third of the children did not develop a positive behavior. This category of subjects was named by the author as resilient children (Werner E.E. & Smith R.S., 1979).

Norman Garmezy and Ann Masten conducted longitudinal research in the 1970s on the abilities of American children at risk in the family environment. They focused on certain social skills (academic success, appropriate classroom behavior, interpersonal skills) that were considered as resilience indicators. Ann Masten (2012) will describe resilience as "the ability of a dynamic system to withstand or recover from major threats to stability, viability, or development." (Masten A., Tellegen A., 2012) Norman Garmezy (1983, 1996) also worked on protection factors, separating them into three classes: child-centered, family-based, and social-protective environment (Tisseron, 2014). This is how the concepts of resilience and protection factors emerged (Manciaux, 2001).

In the 1970s, Michael Rutter worked on protective factors that could counterbalance the vulnerability factors (Tisseron, 2014). According to him, resilience is not a character trait, but a result of adaptation, a process that involves individual and environmental characteristics (Poirot, 2007).

Resilience is defined as a construct that encompasses a person's abilities to cope with environmental situations perceived as difficult, without any negative effects from them (Kinman G. & Grant L., 2011). From another perspective, resilience is also defined as an absence of vulnerability (Sturgeon J.A. & Zautra A.J., 2013). Luthar S.S., Cicchetti D. and Becker B. (2000) define resilience as a dynamic process that consists of a positive adaptation when the person is in an aversive context.

Murray K. and Zautra A. (2012) define resilience as an adaptive response from three different perspectives:

- a. *resilience as recovery*: this perspective on resilience is the most common in the literature. It refers to the ability of people to make psychophysiological and social efforts to return to the functioning level they had before the contact with the stressor;
- b. *resilience as support*: this feature of resilience refers to people's ability to sustain themselves, to maintain their goals, desires, values, and to move forward despite stressful events without change;
- c. *resilience such as growth*: this aspect of resilience includes the benefits that come from dealing with the stressor in the form of gaining information about oneself.

A person's resilience is essential in order to reduce the effects of stress. Each person responds differently to stressful events depending on their resilience factors. Every unpleasant moment or situation is "a resilience test". It is important for people to identify their own protective factors against stress and to learn how to develop new skills to cope with the unpleasant situations they encounter (Podina I.R., 2017).

Another approach concerns resilience from three different perspectives: as an aptitude, as a process and as a result. *Resilience as an aptitude* or competence refers to a person's ability to adapt to changes and stressful events in a healthy way (Catalano R.F., Berglund M.L., Ryan J.A.M., Lonczak H.S., Hawkins J.D., 2004). *Resilience as a process* is seen as a return to normal functioning with the support of protective factors, after encountering a factor that generates intense stress. *Resilience as a result* is defined as the positive and beneficial effect that emerges from experiencing or encountering stressful events (Lee T.Y., Cheung C.K., Kwong W. M., 2012).

The stakeholders from OECD Education 2030 co-developed a "learning compass" that showed how young people could navigate their lives and their world (*figure 1*).

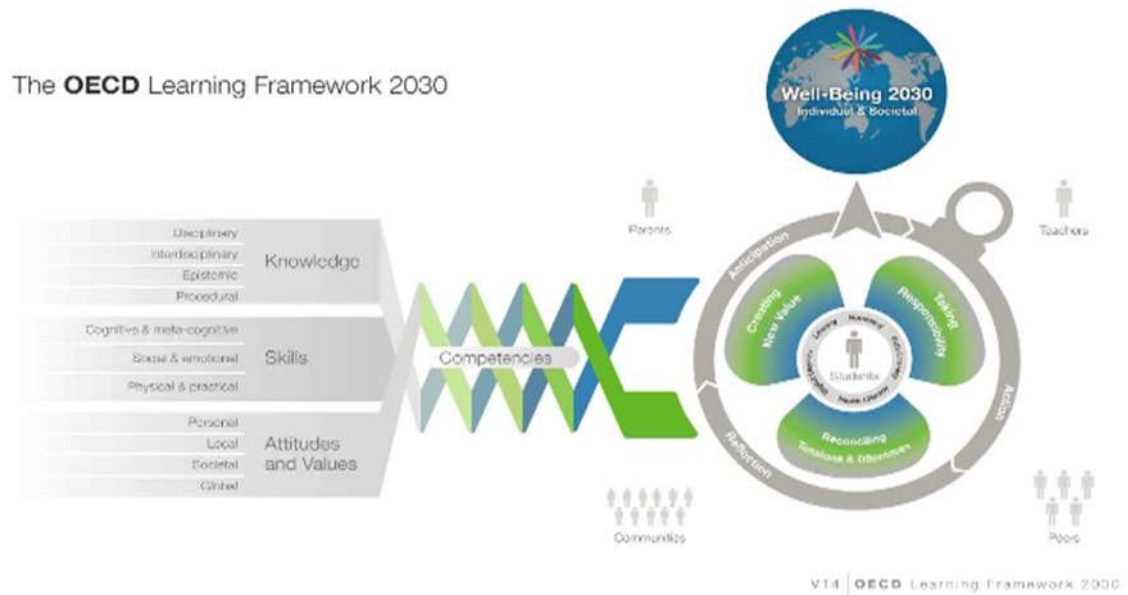


Figure 1 The OECD Learning Framework 2030: Work-in-progress, OECD (2018)

There are several critical abilities associated with resilience, including (Hargraves V., 2021):

- emotional regulation*, or the ability to keep calm and express emotions in a way that helps the situation;
- impulse control*, which involves the ability to make a conscious choice to act on a desire (or not), as well as to delay gratification and persevere;
- causal analysis*, or the ability to analyze problems and identify causes;
- empathy*, or the ability to understand the feelings and needs of another person;
- realistic optimism*, or the ability to keep a positive outlook without denying reality;
- self-efficacy*, or the belief in one’s ability to solve problems and handle stress;
- opportunity-seeking*, or the ability to take new opportunities and reach out to others.

Kenneth Ginsburg identified seven “C”s of resilience, recognizing that “resilience isn’t a simple, one-part entity.” (figure 2)



Figure 2 The 7 C's of Resilience, Ginsburg K.R. & Jablow M.M. (2015)

Among the examples of good practice of universities, we will focus on the Program initiated

by Curtin University, Queensland University of Technology and University of South Australia (Brewer, 2018). The aim was to help the academic staff understand their own resilience so that they could, in turn, help students enhance their resilience capacity.

The modules of the program and the Learning Outcomes were:

1) Overview: To understand the program aims and structure. To understand the role of the facilitator(s) and participants.

2) To set the scene. To examine the contemporary higher education environment. To understand the drivers for resilience enhancement in the higher education context.

3) Conceptualization of resilience. To reflect on one's own conceptualization of resilience and to experience it. To understand historical views of resilience. To define resilience.

4) To enhance resilience. To criticize intervention research of contemporary resilience within the higher education context. To understand key approaches to resilience enhancement within an ecological framework. To critique resources related to resilience enhancement.

5) Leadership: To reflect on one's own conceptualization of leadership and to experience it. To understand contemporary approaches to leadership within the higher education context. To consider sustainable change supports including networking, peer coaching and mentoring. To create an action plan to lead change in your context.

6) Optional modules:

a) Scholarly Project: To develop a scholarly project.

b) Mindset: To consider mindset as a factor in enhancing or detracting from resilience.

CONCLUSIONS

A person's resilience is essential in order to reduce the effects of stress. Each person responds differently to stressful events depending on their resilience factors. Every unpleasant moment or situation is a "resilience test".

The concept of well-being has been known since 1561 and it means "the state of being happy, healthy, or prosperous: WELFARE" (*Merriam-Webster.com dictionary*). "Well-being is most commonly used in philosophy to describe what is non-instrumentally or ultimately good for a person." (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2017 Edition).

The stakeholders from OECD Education 2030 co-developed a "learning compass" that showed how young people could navigate their lives and their world (OECD, 2018).

Universities need to apply resilience measurement tools. On this basis, universities need to develop coherent programs to develop resilience in students, teachers and all categories of university staff.

I briefly presented a program commenced by three universities in Australia (Brewer, 2018).

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