

## Black Educators' Resilience in Teaching As a Career

by

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### Abstract

*In this study educators' resilience in teaching as a career was investigated. The Experienced Teacher Survey (ETS) and Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ) were used to determine the relationship between educators' personalities and their resilience levels. The findings indicated that educators differed significantly in the extent to which they were resilient in relation to teaching as a career. The findings also indicated that educators' biographical variables, namely gender, teaching experience and teaching phase had no significant influence on educators' resilience in teaching as a career. The findings further indicated that there was correlation between educators' resilience and the dimension of neurotic personality. Suggestion for further similar research so that more light can be shed on the findings was made.*

### INTRODUCTION

In studies carried out in several countries, resilience as a personal characteristic that enables individuals to 'stay the course' despite the difficulties that they encounter has been studied extensively as it relates to the education of at-risk students (Aronson, 2001; Johnson, 1997; Mampane & Bouwer, 2006; McMillan & Read, 1994; Theron, 2004; 2006). Fewer studies have focused on resilience in teachers (Brunetti, 2001; Brunetti, 2006; Marston, Brunetti & Courtney, 2005; Marston, Courtney & Brunetti, 2006; Patterson, Collins & Abbott, 2004; Stanford, 2001). The importance of developing resilience in teachers if they are in turn to foster this trait in students is emphasised by other authors (Bobek, 2002; Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Resilience is of importance in teaching for three reasons. Firstly, it is unrealistic to expect students to be resilient if their teachers, who constitute a primary source of their role models, do not demonstrate resilient qualities (Henderson & Milstein, 2003). Secondly, teaching is a demanding job in an emerging "age of diversity and sustainability" (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Thirdly, resilience is closely allied to a strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy and motivation to teach (Gu & Day, 2006).

In his study of resilience in teachers, Stanford (2001) found that teachers attributed their resilience to their devotion to students and to the support that they received from colleagues, family, churches and from their own spiritual values. Various studies (Brunetti, 2001; Brunetti, 2006; Marston *et al.*, 2005) found that teachers' love for working with students, professional and personal fulfilment as well as support in their work from administrators, fellow teachers, the organisation and management of the school were cited by teachers as important factors that kept them in the classroom. In their study, Patterson *et al.*, (2004) identified acting from a set of values in decision making, seeking professional development, mentoring other teachers and focusing on students and their learning as strategies that teachers used to build resilience.

Brunetti (2006) points out that, although several studies on resilience in students and teachers have been conducted, less clear is the extent to which it is an inherent personality characteristic or predisposition. He further asserts that further research on this question could prove valuable new information for identifying teacher candidates who are notably resilient or who demonstrate a strong potential for developing that trait.

Kaplan (1999) asserts that resilient individuals are considered to have a hardy personality, because hardy individuals are likely to employ adaptive coping strategies and not maladaptive responses like denial or behavioural avoidance. This seems to suggest that there is a relationship between one's personality characteristic and resilience.

After the new South African government came into existence in 1994, the demands facing educators have changed quite drastically. Some of these demands are Curriculum 2005; Revised National Curriculum Statement; Outcomes-Based Education; Continuous assessment; abolition of corporal punishment; school governance policy; inclusive education. Studies conducted during this period indicate that a large proportion of educators report a relatively high level of stress from their work (Ngidi, 1998; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002). Violence in schools and abuse of drugs by learners has also attracted wide media coverage. Despite all these demands and reports, educators remain in the classroom.

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

Despite the difficulties faced by educators in South African schools, very few, if any, studies have attempted to investigate educators' resilience in relation to teaching as well as the relationship between educators' resilience and their personality dimensions. The present study intends to do that. This present study attempts to explore the following research questions:

- To what extent are educators in KwaZulu-Natal resilient in teaching as a career?
- Do educators' biographical variables (gender, teaching experience and teaching phase) have any influence on their resilience?

- Is there any relationship between educators' personality dimensions and their resilience levels?

**CONCEPT CLARIFICATION**

Resilience is defined as using energy productively to achieve school goals in the face of adverse conditions (Patterson *et al*, 2004:4). Resilience is also defined as a quality that enables teachers to maintain their commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks (Brunetti, 2006: 812). In the present study, resilience is defined as a determination of educators to remain in teaching despite the difficulties that they encounter. The term educator, in this study, refers to and used interchangeable with a teacher. The South African Schools Act No. 84 of 1996 (Republic of South Africa, 1996: 2) also refers to a teacher as an educator. Personality is defined as a complex pattern of deeply embedded psychological characteristics that are largely unconscious, cannot be eradicated easily, and express themselves automatically in almost every facet of functioning (Edwards, 1995: 624). In the present study, the term personality refers to an unconscious and automatic way of relating to others or dealing with or reacting to different situations. Personality dimensions are defined as combinations of traits or factors which are relatively permanent reaction tendencies (Schultz & Schultz, 2005:289).

**METHOD**

Aims and objectives of research

The present research aimed at achieving the following objectives:

- To ascertain the extent to which educators in KwaZulu-Natal are resilient in teaching as a career.
- To determine whether educators' biographical variables (gender, teaching experience and teaching phase) have any influence on educators' resilience.
- To determine whether there is any relationship between educators' personality dimensions, namely neuroticism (N) and Extraversion (E) and educators' resilience levels.

Hypotheses

The following theoretical hypotheses were formulated:

- Educators in KwaZulu-Natal do not differ in the extent to which they are resilient in teaching as a career.
- Educators' biographical variables (gender, teaching experience and teaching phase) have no influence on educators' resilience.
- There is no relationship between educators' personality dimensions and their resilience levels.

Participants

KwaZulu-Natal province is about 92 180 square kilometres in size. In the time of investigation it consisted of four educational regions. These regions in their alphabetical order are: eThekweni; Pietermaritzburg; uKhahlamba; and Zululand. A list of schools in each region was obtained. In order to ensure that the results were not biased, a sample was drawn from each region. Stratified random sampling was used to select an equal number of schools from each of the four regions. There were 6135 schools in KwaZulu-Natal at the time of investigation. The number of schools in each region was: eThekweni 1477, Pietermaritzburg 1511, uKhahlamba 1180 and Zululand 1967. Equal number of schools included from each region was three. Therefore, there were 12 randomly selected schools. The twelve selected schools were used for drawing a sample of educators for this study (Table 1).

TABLE 1 DISTRIBUTION OF PARTICIPANTS ACCORDING TO BIOGRAPHICAL VARIABLES (N=270)

GENDER		TEACHING EXPERIENCE: IN YEARS					TEACHING PHASE		
Male	Female	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+	F	I	S
54	216	85	56	60	26	43	147	74	49

F = Foundation phase      I = Intermediate phase      S = Senior phase

Table 1 illustrates the distribution of educators who volunteered to participate in the study according to their biographical variables, namely, gender, teaching experience and teaching phase. Participants included 270 educators, exclusively from previous black schools. Out of 400 questionnaires that were distributed, 270 were returned, which is 68 % return rate.

Measures

The research instrument consisted of two sections, covering the aims of study. The first section consisted of the Experienced Teacher Survey (ETS). The second section consisted of the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ).

*Experienced Teacher Survey (ETS)*

Experienced Teacher Survey (ETS) was developed by Brunetti (2001) to assess teachers' satisfaction with their jobs (four items) and to explore factors that motivated them to persist in the classroom (eighteen items). The present study modified the original instrument in two ways. First, only biographical

information relevant to the present study was adapted and new one added. Second, only items on factors that contribute to teacher persistence were adopted.

Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which their decision to continue working as a classroom teacher been influenced by each of the eighteen factors listed. The ratings were: not important (1), of little importance (2), somewhat important (3), and very important (4). The internal consistency reliability for the ETS instrument in this study, measured by Cronbach's alpha was 0.70. This is an acceptable reliability (Muijs, 2004; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

The ETS consists of 18 items. The lowest possible score on this instrument is  $18 \times 1 = 18$  and the highest possible score is  $18 \times 4 = 72$ . This continuum of 18-72 was arbitrarily divided into three categories, namely: 18-36 indicating a low resilience level (LRL); 37-54 a moderate resilience level (MRL); and 55-72 showing a high resilience level (HRL). Therefore, the respondent's summated score was classified accordingly into one of these categories. This procedure yielded data to fulfil the first aim. Data obtained through this procedure were used together with those of the educators' biographical data in order to meet the second aim of the present study.

*Eysenck Personality Questionnaire (EPQ)*

This is a standardized instrument which measures four scales, namely: Neuroticism (N), Extraversion (N), Psychoticism (P), and Lie (L). For the purposes of this investigation, Neuroticism (with 23 items) and Extraversion (with 21 items) subscales were selected. Literature shows that these two factors contribute more than the other two, to a description of personality (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1975; 1985). The use of EPQ has been extended to the Republic of South Africa (Adendorff, 1997; Ngidi, 1998). Adendorff (1997) established in her sample that internal consistency reliability, measured by Cronbach's alpha, was 0.80 for Neuroticism and 0.67 for Extraversion. In his study, Ngidi (1988) established an internal consistency reliability of 0.85 for Neuroticism and 0.76 for Extraversion. In the present study, the internal consistency reliability was 0.73 for Neuroticism and 0.60 for Extraversion. The EPQ was used to meet the third aim of the present study.

Procedures

The researcher personally administered the research instruments to the participants. The administration was preceded by an explanation of the nature of the instruments and the purpose of the investigation. The participants were ensured of the confidentiality of their information.

In order to achieve the aims of this study, various statistical procedures were followed. The chi-square one sample test was used to ascertain the extent to which educators in KwaZulu-Natal are resilient in relation to teaching as a career (aim number one). The chi-square test of independence was used to

determine whether educators' biographical variables (gender, teaching experience and teaching phase) have any influence on educators' resilience (aim number two). The chi-square test is appropriate for categorical data. The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine whether there is any relationship between educators' personality factors and their resilience levels (aim number three). The Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (r) is an appropriate parametric measure of association.

In order to understand how the educators responded to each factor which has influenced their decisions to continue working as classroom teachers, descriptive statistics were used. To this end, data were summarised by averaging group scores (Table 7). When the mean or average for the responses to each item was converted to the nominal categories, it gave an indication of the group's responses to a particular item (Henerson, Morris & Fitz-Gibbon, 1987; Orlich, 1978).

RESULTS

Table 2 shows that there were no observed frequencies for LRL group cell, therefore, it was advisable to collapse it.

With regard to the first aim, the chi-square test ( $\chi^2 = 227.793$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p<0.05$ ) indicated that significant difference was found between moderate resilience level (MRL) and high resilience level (HRL) groups (Table 2). This finding showed that educators differ in the extent to which they are resilient in relation to teaching as a career. The two groups of resilience levels differed between themselves. Put differently, the existence of these two groups was not due to chance factors but was statistically significant.

TABLE 2 RESPONDENTS GROUPED ACCORDING TO RESILIENCE LEVELS

	MRL (37-54)	HRL (55-72)
Frequencies	11	259
$\chi^2 = 227.793$	$df = 1$	$p < 0.05$

The results of analysis for the second aim revealed that no significant difference was found between males and females with regard to reported resilience levels (Table 3). This finding showed that gender has no influence on educators' resilience in relation to teaching as a career. Any gender differences pertaining to the two resilience levels were due to chance factors, and not statistically significant.

TABLE 3 GENDER AND RESILIENCE LEVELS

GENDER	MRL (37-54)	HRL (55-72)
Male	2	52
Female	9	207

$\chi^2 = 0.024$        $df = 1$        $p > 0.05$

Table 4 also indicates that no significant difference was found among different years of teaching experience (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20, and 21 and above) with regard to resilience levels reported. This finding showed that teaching experience had no influence on educators' resilience in relation to teaching as a career. Any teaching experience-related differences pertaining to the two resilience levels were due to chance factors, and not statistically significant.

TABLE 4 TEACHING EXPERIENCE AND RESILIENCE LEVELS

TEACHING EXPERIENCE: IN YEARS	MRL (37-54)	HRL (55-72)
1-5	3	82
6-10	1	55
11-15	6	54
16-20	0	26
20+	1	42

$\chi^2 = 7.647$        $df = 4$        $p > 0.05$

Table 5 also shows that no significant difference was found among Foundation phase, Intermediate phase and Senior phase with regard to resilience levels reported. This finding showed that teaching phase had no influence on educators' resilience in relation to teaching as a career. Any teaching phase-related differences pertaining to the two resilience levels were due to chance factors, and not statistically significant.

TABLE 5 TEACHING PHASE AND RESILIENCE LEVELS

TEACHING PHASE	MRL (37-54)	HRL (55-72)
Foundation	8	139
Intermediate	1	73
Senior	2	47

$\chi^2 = 2.108$        $df = 2$        $p > 0.05$

Table 6 illustrates the results of analysis for the third aim. It shows the correlation coefficients of personality dimensions and resilience factors related

to teaching as a career. According to Table 6, the correlation between the dimension of neurotic personality and resilience related to teaching as a career ( $r=0.75$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) is reasonably strong, positive and significant. This means that educators who manifest neurotic personality are prone to resilience related to teaching as a career. The correlation between extraversion personality dimension and resilience related to teaching as a career ( $r=0.13$ ,  $p>0.05$ ) is very weak, positive but not significant.

TABLE 6 CORRELATION BETWEEN RESILIENCE AND EXTRAVERSION/NEUROTICISM

Personality	Correlation	Probability
Extraversion	0.13	0.09
Neuroticism	0.75	0.02*

\* $p < 0.05$

Table 7 shows that factors related to educators' love for working with learners, personal and professional fulfilment derived from teaching as well as support from colleagues were ranked high. It also reveals that factors related to no or less engagement in teaching were ranked the lowest. This gives an indication that educators are committed to teaching as a career.

TABLE 7 RANK ORDER OF GROUP RESPONSES TO ITEMS 1-18 (N=270)

Rank Order	Factor	Mean	SD
1	Satisfaction at seeing young people learn and grow	3.91	0.315
2	Joy in teaching your subject	3.86	0.363
3	Satisfaction in being successful at something you enjoy (teaching)	3.85	0.399
4	Satisfaction in fulfilling a professional commitment	3.79	0.497
4	Satisfaction in working with young people	3.79	0.468
6	Good teacher colleagues	3.75	0.555
7	Salary and benefits	3.69	0.699
8	The opportunity to be creative (e.g. in designing curriculum and lessons)	3.67	0.604
9	Satisfaction in serving society	3.66	0.541
10	Enjoyment of school as an institution	3.65	0.637
11	Supportive parents, community	3.64	0.823
12	A good principal	3.62	0.726
12	Freedom and flexibility in the classroom	3.62	0.633
14	Job security	3.59	0.803
15	The intellectual challenges involved in teaching	3.53	0.613
16	Advantages of a teaching schedule for someone raising a family	3.32	0.768
17	The holidays	3.04	1.027
18	No where to go	2.50	1.146

## DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that educators differed significantly in the extent to which they were resilient in relation to teaching as a career. A very high percentage (95.9%) of them reported a high level of resilience compared to those who reported a moderate level (4.1%) (Table 2). None of the educators reported a low resilience level. This means that the majority of educators were resilient in teaching as a career.

The findings also revealed that the biographical variables, namely gender, teaching experience, and teaching phase, (Tables 3, 4 and 5), had no influence on their resilience. This means that gender, teaching experience and teaching phase were not significant factors that influence educators' resilience in teaching.

The findings also indicated that the correlation between the dimension of neurotic personality and educators' resilience was reasonably strong, positive and significant (Table 6). These findings confirm that there is a relationship between resilience and personality (Kaplan, 1999; Gu & Day, 2006). No matter what explanation is given, it is not clear why there is relationship between emotionally unstable educators and resilience in teaching. May be, such relationship can be explained in terms of the characteristics of emotional stability-emotional instability dimensions (Eysenck & Eysenck, 1985). A neurotic (emotionally unstable) educator is anxious and worried. The opposite holds for a stable educator. Neurotic, rather than stable educators may be more concerned about the success of their learners, hence develop resilience.

With regard to the order of factors which have influenced educators' decisions to continue working as classroom teachers, factors related to their love for working with learners, personal and professional fulfilment derived from teaching as well as support from colleagues were ranked high (Table 7). These findings accords with those reported in the United States of America ((Brunetti, 2001; Brunetti, 2006; Marston *et al.*, 2005).

The factors that were ranked the lowest, the last three, were those associated with less engagement in teaching. These findings concur with those of Brunetti (2001); Brunetti, (2006); Marston *et al.*, (2005). This indicated that teachers were committed to teaching as a career.

It is encouraging to find that although a large proportion of educators experienced a relatively high level of stress from their work (Ngidi, 1998; Ngidi & Sibaya, 2002) but in the present study a very high percentage of them reported a high level of resilience in teaching as a career.

## CONCLUSION

Resilience is a multi-facet (Oswald, Johnson & Howard, 2003) and unstable construct and its manifestation vary from person to person (Gu & Day, 2006). Given the findings of this study, which revealed that the majority of educators are resilient in teaching as a career and that there is a strong, positive and significant correlation between neurotic personality dimension and educators' resilience in teaching as a career, further similar research is proposed so that more light can be shed on the findings.

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### Learners' Involvement in Democratic Governance of Schools: A Comparative Study between Britain and South Africa

by

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#### Abstract

*This article explores the voice of learners in the democratic governance of schools in South Africa, comparing it internationally with Britain to the benefits of involving learners on issues of school governance and the need for democracy in school governance in terms of learner involvement. This article discusses democratic reform of school structures in South Africa in the context of evidence of democratic education internationally. It also looks at democracy and issues of social justice following the South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 (SASA). The study reported in the paper explored learners' involvement in democratic governance of schools in South Africa, comparing it to Britain, in terms of the actual functions of School Governing Bodies (SGBs), the role of learners in SGBs, the role of learner governors in decision-making, the involvement of learner governors in curriculum issues, and the role of learner governors in promoting democracy in the school. The findings suggest that learner governors play an important role of being the voice of learners, allowing the needs and concerns of learners to be effectively met. There are benefits of involving learners in school governance matters like, improved communications and friendlier relationship between staff and learners, improved responsibility and accountability and ownership of the school, better functioning of the SGB, the needs of learners are better met by the school, effective communication of the needs of learners by their peers. However, there are indications that learners in South Africa in most schools are solely used for decoration and as tokenism (learners took part in the liberation struggle against apartheid education in South Africa). In addition, together with parents learners tend to be excluded when the code of conduct for learners is formulated by only the teaching staff, which is contrary to the findings by Harber (1993) that rules are better kept when mutually agreed by all parties involved. Finally the study suggests that the involvement of learners in SGBs can contribute to democracy in the school and in wider South African society.*