Resilience in Schools

Resilience may be defined as a process of adaptation and growth (academic, vocational, social-emotional) despite adversity such as poverty, forced displacement, violence, abuse and trauma. Rather than simply an individual quality or competence, resilience is the result of the interaction between the individual and the environment, such as the family, the community, the school and broader socio-cultural system.

Protective factors

While striving to prevent, eradicate or reduce the risks children face in their developmental pathway, we need to help them keep growing and thriving even in the face of risk by nurturing individual protective factors and creating caring, supportive and inclusive contexts. The following protective factors have been identified by the literature to promote resilient outcomes.

Individual factors

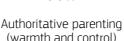Positive self-concept

Emotional regulation

Problem-solving skills

Sense of purpose

School factors

Caring teachers

Positive classroom relationships

Learning support

High expectations for all learners

Family factors

Secure attachment

Stable family environment

Authoritative parenting (warmth and control)

Broader social context

Prosocial and caring adults in the community

Prosocial peer group

Safe neighbourhoods

However, rather than the sum of these protective factors, resilient outcomes depend on the interacting process between the nature of the adversity, the individual child's qualities and personality, and the context/s where the child is growing up. Resilience is thus a unique and dynamic process, and there is not a magic bullet which works for all children in all contexts all the time.

What schools can do

Caring school and classroom community: Resilience supportive classrooms are characterised by caring teacher-students relationships, supportive and inclusive peers, equal access to necessary resources, active and meaningful engagement, learner voice and choice, personalised learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and positive beliefs and high expectations, promoting a sense of belonging, competence and control. A caring teacher/member of staff is one of the most effective processes of resilience.

Programmes

Universal, skills based curriculum: Universal resilience programmes for all learners include such competences as healthy relationships, problem solving, a growth mindset and self-determination. Universal programmes are more likely to be effective if they are integrated into the curriculum.

Targeted interventions: Learners at risk or experiencing social and emotional difficulties benefit from targeted interventions adjusted to their specific needs. Schools are advised to choose programmes which are evidence based while ensuring these are suited to the needs of their learners.

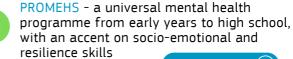### Examples of relevant EU funded resilience programmes

1 RESCUR Surfing the Waves Resilience Programme – a skills based resilience curriculum for early years and primary school children

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3 PROMEHS – a universal mental health programme from early years to high school, with an accent on socio-emotional and resilience skills

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2 UPRIGHT – Universal Preventive Resilience Intervention to promote Mental Health for Teenagers
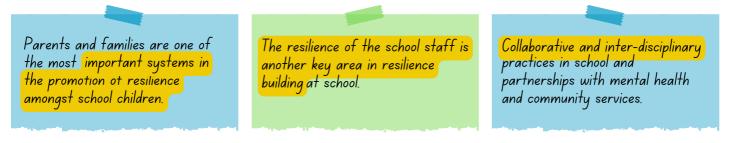
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4 Refugees Well School – an intervention programme to enhance teachers' competence in supporting refugee learners

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Multiple systems interventions

Resilience thrives in multiple social systems such as classrooms, schools, peer group, family, professionals, community and culture, with one ecological system supporting the processes in the other systems.

Parents and families are one of the most important systems in the promotion of resilience amongst school children.

The resilience of the school staff is another key area in resilience building at school.

Collaborative and inter-disciplinary practices in school and partnerships with mental health and community services.

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