

## **Hilary Emery TDA Executive Director for Development and Improvement**

### **TDA POLICY PERSPECTIVES ON RESILIENCE**

#### **1. Who We Are and What We Do :**

This session gave an overview of activity related to resilience that TDA was undertaking. Due to the timing of the session whether these activities would be sustained by the new Coalition government was yet to be determined.

The Training and Development Agency for Schools (TDA) is the government's school workforce delivery organisation, developing people to improve young lives. It supports the recruitment, training, development and reform of the workforce in schools to improve teaching and learning.

#### **2. Policy Context and Wider Perspectives**

- a) An emphasis on the crucial importance of the quality of teaching for supporting every child to succeed and raise standards.
- b) A recognition of the knowledge and skills, academic, professional and personal, needed to support high quality teachers and teaching.
- c) The New Opportunities White Paper (2009) prompted work drawing on national and International evidence on the tools and techniques used to identify applicants who would make good teachers. These included how to evaluate academic and wider skills, including empathy, communication and resilience. TDA is developing and piloting with providers a diagnostic tool to identify and assess these wider skills.
- d) Other professions such as medicine and dentistry include assessment of resilience as part of initial selection.
- e) Internationally Finland, Singapore and Canada all include assessment of personal skills such as resilience as part of initial selection procedures
- f) Teacher effectiveness research while describing resilience in various ways consistently suggests it is significant.

#### **3. Teach First**

- a) Teach First require at least a 2:1 degree and selection includes assessing academic and wider skills:
  - Humility, respect and empathy
  - Interaction with others
  - Subject knowledge
  - Leadership
  - Planning and organising
  - Problem solving
  - Resilience; and
  - Self evaluation
- b) Potential candidates undertake an assessment centre, which comprises interviews, a short model lesson and a group case study exercise. Resilience is seen as crucial in enabling participants to succeed on the

programme and deal with the ups and downs of classroom teaching in challenging schools. The criteria for resilience are:

- A positive outlook, consistently draws the positive from challenges
- Perseveres, sustaining high levels of energy to achieve results despite the odds and significant adversity
- Under pressure acts and progresses in a calm and mature manner.

- c) Resilience is tested through interview and the case study where applicants develop and defend their point of view against others in the group. For example, making a case for using the school budget to support their subject area against competing bids. Applicants must demonstrate all the competencies to be accepted.

#### 4. QTS Interview Diagnostic Tool Research Project

- a) The objective of the Interview Diagnostic Tool project is to research, design and pilot a questionnaire, which will be used in conjunction with other assessments and processes, as a means of identifying the strengths and development needs of potential teachers. It aims to help the assessment of candidates by providing a method that standardises the way in which providers assess some core competencies.
- b) It is anticipated that it will be piloted with PGCE courses and then trailed on undergraduate and employment based programmes.
- c) Areas that were identified in early discussions as significant are detailed below. The first six items were mentioned, in various combinations, by all the respondents:
- Ability to “think on your feet”/be adaptable/be flexible
  - Well developed relational and interpersonal skills
  - **Ability to cope with pressurised situations/be resilient/have stamina**
  - Ability to organise and structure work/time management skills
  - Passion for teaching/commitment to teaching and the PGCE course
  - Presence/impact/strength of personality
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- *Intellectual capability/ability to think critically/have depth of thought*
  - *Ability to think creatively/be resourceful/be open minded*
  - *Confidence/sense of self-efficacy/self-esteem*
  - *Ability to relate positively to children from all backgrounds*
  - *Ability to communicate effectively in spoken/written English*
  - *Subject knowledge/particular requirements of field of study*
  - *Enthusiasm and interest in particular field of study*
  - *Ability to make balanced and timely decisions*
  - *Sense of the range of a teacher’s professional skills/responsibilities*
  - *Commitment to working and collaborating with colleagues*
  - *Diversity mindedness/positive attitude to equal opportunities*

- d) From these diagnostic tools for three areas are being developed: Adaptability, Emotional Resilience and Self-Organisation. These correspond – although articulated in more specific terms – with the attributes that were identified as important in the preliminary research (Parkinson, 2009). In relation to resilience it is being seen as “The capacity to recover or spring back”. (Davidson et al, 2005). It is seen as having key features that include: the ability to perform when under pressure; quickly restore energy levels; keep emotions in check; remain positive; handle criticism and learn from it.
- e) The assumption is that resilience is one of the main “survivability” factors in teaching. It assumes that individuals will learn from experience not just revert to their starting point so it is about the ability to learn how to manage pressures positively and grow as a result. Too little means an individual may not cope, too much might produce behaviours that lack sensitivity and empathy so balance is important.
- f) Resilience is rooted in aspects of the (low) “Anxiety” or “Emotional Stability” (well adjusted, calm and resilient) factor that is used in at least five personality questionnaires (Barrick & Mount, 1991; Psychometrics Ltd, 2002; Saville & Holdsworth, 2005; Costa & McCrae, 2006). In addition emotional stability, as a single personality factor, is correlated with motivation and job satisfaction (Judge, 2005).
- g) Resilience is seen as key in preventing burn-out in careers such as counselling, therapy, teaching and health (Skovholt, 2001; Reivich & Shatte, 2002). It also features in research directed specifically at teacher effectiveness including the VITAE research (Day and Saunders 2006).

## **5. Evidence about factors affecting the experiences of beginning teachers**

- a) The Becoming a Teacher research showed that the experience of becoming and being a teacher is demanding and challenging. It can be rewarding and enjoyable but at times frustrating and upsetting. Three factors were found to be associated with beginning teachers’ enjoyment, retention and perceived effectiveness of their teaching:
- They felt “very well” supported by (for example) mentors and other teacher colleagues;
  - They reported “very good” relationships with pupils and did not regard the behaviour of the pupils they taught as problematic or unacceptable; and
  - They indicated that they had a manageable workload and a healthy or acceptable work-life balance.
- b) Additional contributory factors associated with beginner teachers’ enjoyment, retention and perceived effectiveness, included:
- Their participation in appropriate training (post-ITT) and the availability and use of further opportunities for continuing professional development;

- Collegiality and teamwork, including planning, sharing resources and team-teaching with colleagues; and
  - Having positive relationships with their head teacher.
- c) The majority were positive about their development as a teacher, with 33% (Wave 5) and 31% (Wave 6) stating that “nothing” had hindered their development. However specific hindrances reported were:
- “lack of support from colleagues” (22% and 25%)
  - “Workload” (14% and 11%) and
  - “amount of administration/paperwork” (10% in both surveys)
- d) Beginner teachers’ overall ratings of the support they received declined between the first and fourth years of teaching.
- At each Wave of the telephone survey, older teachers consistently tended to rate the support they felt they received less highly than their younger colleagues. The proportion of respondents mentioning a “lack of support from colleagues” as a hindrance to their development as teachers increased from 18% in their second year of teaching to 22% in their third and fourth years.

## **6. The National Workforce Agreement (2003).**

- Policy context between 2003 and mid-2010 of the National Workforce Agreement with National Social Partnership (comprising leadership, teaching and support staff unions, employers and government) and Local Social Partnerships supporting implementation of the agreement.
- The agreement was about tackling workload and raising standards with an emphasis on freeing up teachers to focus on teaching.
- Reduction in non teaching tasks teachers undertook and the provision of 10% planning, preparation and assessment time (PPA) has led to an increase in support staff numbers and diversity of roles including trained higher level teaching assistants (HLTAs).
- Evidence of impact of the agreement on teachers’ perceptions included improved work/life balance and greater manageability. Initially although Ofsted found changes in teachers’ perceptions of the impact on standards there was little evaluation evidence to support this but the 2009 report found some schools evidencing the impact on standards. The impact on teachers’ perception of working time has been that while reductions in actual working hours have been real but small they felt they now devoted more time to teaching and directly related work.

Across the TDA and working with partners there is a recognition of the importance of factors such as resilience in enabling teachers and the wider workforce to be successful and satisfied from initial preparation, through induction and into professional development.