Embedding child mental health into initial teacher training

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Child Mental Health

- One in four people on average experience a mental health problem, with the majority of these beginning in childhood. A report by the Chief Medical Officer in 2014 found that 50 per cent of adult mental health problems start before the age of 15 and 75 per cent before the age of 18.
There has also been a drive to improve the provision of mental health support in schools. In June 2014, the Department for Education published guidance for schools on identifying and supporting pupils who may have mental health problems.

In March 2015, the Department provided schools with practical, evidence-based advice on how to deliver high-quality school-based counselling. The Department also funded the PSHE Association to produce guidance on teaching about mental health problems.

Is this enough????????
2010-15 Government

- The Coalition Government’s 2011 Mental Health strategy, No Health without Mental Health set out the Government’s plan to improve mental health outcomes for people of all ages. The foreword stated that:

  - ‘By promoting good mental health and intervening early, particularly in the crucial childhood and teenage years, we can help to prevent mental illness from developing and mitigate its effects when it does.’
Child Mental Health

- There have been calls for teaching on mental health to be introduced as a mandatory subject on the national curriculum – mental health and wellbeing is part of the non statutory programme of study for Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) education, produced by the PSHE Association.

- The Department for Education have confirmed that schools should have flexibility to teach over and above what the national curriculum requires, including on mental health.
The **Implementation Framework** for this strategy, published in July 2012, described how different bodies, such as schools, employers and local authorities, should work together to support people’s mental health. It recommended that schools promote children and young people’s wellbeing and mental health.
In January 2014, the Government published Closing the Gap: priorities for essential change in mental health. This outlined areas for immediate change to improve mental health care.
In July 2014, a taskforce, led by the Department of Health and NHS England, examined how to improve child and adolescent mental health care. The ‘Future in Mind’ report (March 2015) set ambitions for:

- ‘improving care over the next five years, including making better links between schools and specialist services’
Initial Teacher Training

- School Direct
- School-centred initial teacher training (SCITT)
- Teach First
- Troops to Teachers
- University and college-based routes – undergraduate and postgraduate degrees with Qualified Teacher Status
Initial Teacher Training

Carter (2015) identified core elements to enhance and equip trainee teachers with the required skills and knowledge to become outstanding teachers.

Child and adolescent development is at the core of this and Carter (2015) highlights the need for student teachers to understand child and adolescent development and have knowledge in regards to what issues can impact on pupil progress as well as enabling the students to provide a positive and nurturing environment for children and young people.
The 2015 Conservative general election manifesto outlined a number of commitments on the training of teachers:

‘In the next Parliament, we will expect every teacher to be trained not just in how to tackle serious behaviour issues, but also in how to deal with the low level disruption that stops children from learning properly.’

Reforming the content of ITT to include a greater focus on subject knowledge, behaviour management, evidence-based practice and adapting the needs of pupils from different groups.
Child Mental Health

- It is becoming more apparent that the mental health of children and young people is everyone’s business, this including schools. For schools this can result in approved attainment, attendance, reductions in behavioural problems, as well as happier more confident and resilient pupils (Hart 2011)
Child mental health

This is about further education for students and staff and the Department for Education's policy ‘Counselling in Schools: A blueprint for the future’ (2015) substantiates that ‘resilience is a fundamental factor in the academic achievement of children and young people and that this is not only for the most vulnerable, but for all children’.
Child Mental Health

- For students engaged in teacher training programmes, Morris (2009) argues that student teachers must have as a minimum requirement, a fundamental understanding of how to promote child and adolescent mental health, establish systems to build ‘resilience approaches’ that support disadvantaged pupils and raise achievement over time through a whole school approach.

- As part of their teaching and learning, this requires teaching students to also be given an opportunity to develop their own practical approaches and developing resilience in the class room and within the wider school community (Daniel and Wassell, 2002; DoE, 2014).
Child Mental Health

- It is clear by the evidence based research that raising awareness through the curriculum and through a whole school approach is a way forward in promoting mental health.

- With work being undertaken by Child and Adolescent Charities such as ‘Young Minds’ and ‘Place to Be’ shows that large steps are being made for the future of child and adolescent mental health.
Academic Resilience

- Academic resilience is a paradigm that focuses on human growth and development to describe and theorise the opportunities for children and young people to achieve good educational outcomes despite of the adversity that they might face (Rutter, 1990).

- According to the leading charity Young Minds (2014), the advancement of academic resilience within teacher training programmes requires an approach to teaching and learning that enables the student to understand the various ways that they might help vulnerable children and young people do better than their socio-economic circumstances might predict.

- Establishing the core values of teacher training within the principles of social, emotional material and capital as well as social justice and opportunities for mobility, academic resilience aims to prepare teaching students to address disparity caused through social injustice.
Academic Resilience

The reasons cited for the delayed developing of academic resilience within the teacher training curriculums reflect the wider relationship that teaching has traditionally had with social injustice and educational disadvantage. Given the pressures created by complex league tables, student demographics and the competitive nature of educational attainment, the focus on the wellbeing of the child has not always been seen as the first priority in teaching practice.

As a specific part of the Universal services teaching has traditionally relied on social care and health agencies when concerns around child development and academic resilience became a barrier to attainment (Hart 2013). For this reason, there needs to be a further understanding of the strategies needed to achieve academic resilience in the long term.
Conducted a preparatory case study to consider the ways in which teacher training programmes promote the importance of academic resilience.

Collect data from three cohorts in order to compare findings in relation to the overarching question.

Consider how pedagogic approaches might be adapted so that approaches to teaching and learning can include and assess students understanding of academic resilience in a more meaningful way.
Method

Method: An Online survey was sent to 90 teacher training students inviting them to discuss their knowledge of academic resilience, a core foundation of a contemporary understanding of mental health.
A population of students who were completing the final year of their Early Years, Primary and Secondary Teacher Training were selected from a University in the UK.

These three cohorts were selected using a convince sample of students studying in the final year of Early Years, Primary, and Secondary initial teacher training programme from a University in the North of England.
Despite agreeing that their programme of study had promoted their understanding of academic resilience, 5 people described it as a concept that was more important to them as student teachers, than as a fundamental foundation of mental health:

‘That even though things are not always going right whether that be personal or professional, you can deliver lessons successfully (so) that the progress of the children is at the forefront.’

‘You cannot give up as a teacher, always caring and wanting to help in any way possible. Resilience is a huge quality a teacher must have, cannot give up on children.’

‘Having recently been in a position of having to juggle workload and find strategies to cope with assessments it will, I believe, help with empathy and sharing of coping/approach strategies.’

‘It is something you need yourself and can often help children of difficult situations settle back into learning.’
'So that we are able to 'bounce back' from any situation. Also to enable us to be flexible in our approach to teaching, so that we are able to constantly improve our practice.'
As suggested in the above excerpts, the concept of ‘resilience’: defined as an individual’s ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity, and the concept of ‘academic resilience: the importance of students achieving good educational outcomes despite adversity, have become confused.

Whilst adversity remains a constant factor in each definition, the former is orientated more toward the self, whilst the latter is orientated toward the pupil.

Of course it might be argued that one might follow the other, and on the basis of that argument it could be stated that the reposes given above are accurate to a degree, but in relation to the Carter Review (2015), there is a pressing need to move away from the resilience of individuals teachers per se, so that a whole school focus can instead be given to the pupil.

Unless this orientation is enabled during Teacher Training Programmes, and it becomes more embedded in the praxis of teaching practice, it would seem that this learning must be facilitated elsewhere. The location of this teaching and learning is in practice.
In terms of pedagogic approaches in Higher Education then, this shifting ‘teaching’ focus also necessitates a shifting orientation to the way teachers are being trained to ‘teach’.

Rather than focussing on the various and complex way in which children learn it is clear, form the preliminary data presented here that students must also be mindful of how social determinates can predict, or stereotype, the academic achievement of all children.

The theory of performativity is equally important here, but unless Teacher Training Students are taught the importance of intersectionality, basically the space and place in which the pupils they are training to teach occupy, it is difficult to consider how Early Years, Primary and Secondary education can be effectively maintained.
Child Mental Health and Initial Teacher Training

- Unless concepts related to social mobility, mental health, and student well-being are acknowledged by regulatory bodies, it is possible that these components will not be given equal status as recordable attainment in numeracy and literacy for example.

- The clearest examples that Carter’s (2015) recommendations are not being enacted have been shown in those examples where respondents did understand the importance of academic resilience. Clearly, though, this learning was facilitated in practice rather than in the classroom, and possibly for the reasons already outlined. What this has shown, is that schools are working to achieve best practice and offering students teachers a valuable insight into the challenges that some pupils face.
Child Mental Health and Initial Teacher Training

- In regard to individual learning, this was reported as a memorable learning experience, but in relation to pedagogy, and whole class learning, it is also clear that the opportunities being presented were not available to all students.

- For this reason, and to provide a solution to the barriers already described, the findings of this paper suggest that the periodic review process and internal, and external, approval process should include key stakeholders and representatives from schools to ensure that Quality Assurance Agency standards, and any relevant professional or regulatory body curriculum guides, are informed by those people delivering Early Years, Primary and Secondary education.
Recommendation

The final recommendation is for pedagogical approaches to teacher training to be evidence informed, as defined or prescribed by social policy, but to also be flexibly adaptive to the developments and achievements being made in practice so that students are being fully equipped to deal with the challenges and demands of teaching pupils who increasingly require far more support than traditional methods of instruction have been able to provide.

Here pedagogic approaches to Teacher Training in Higher Education must spend time with each student, as an embedded feature of the curriculum, rather than an optional extension, to discuss and debate the social determinates and pressures of learning in an achievement or outcomes based scenario.

Only when Teacher Training students have received this teaching and learning can they be expected to go on and promote the academic resilience and mental health of the pupils that they are training to support.
Conclusion

- If Teaching students are not taught on human growth and development, the impact of adversity on learning, and the psychological and ecological determinates of attainment, it is difficult to see how the recommendations of Carter (2015) can be consistently achieved in all areas of Early Years, Primary and Secondary Teacher Training.
Questions

- Please feel free to ask questions????????????