‘How can we develop resilience in children, between the ages of 4-6, in a classroom environment?’

Written Summary:

My research project question was inspired by observing young children in a classroom environment. This experience made me question why children react to various situations differently, which led me to the topic of resilience. Through this research project it was discovered that resilience is a complex concept which can be difficult to recognise and difficult to develop. To develop resilience in young children the teacher needs to build a relationship with the child and parents, understand the child’s background and culture and then acknowledge which method or methods will best develop the child’s resilience and put this into their practise. All of these findings were proven through multiple interviews and then physically applied in a case study. My outcome was written in an essay form with all my findings in an ordered manner. My main key finding in my research was how resilience has a variety of factors which contributes to this fascinating area, which makes it a very abstract concept.

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E1-Evaluation of research processes (activities undertaken):

To commence my research project and begin refining my topic I undertook some initial research which involved reading various online articles. These brief articles gave me insight to elements of resilience without going into too many specifics and also removed many of my own preconceived ideas on the topic and limited personal bias in the outcome. For example, an article on MindTools, titled: “Developing Resilience: Overcoming and Growing from Setbacks” demonstrated that resilience is a dynamic developmental construct affected by many factors. However, because these sources were basic articles reliability was a concern as the authors lacked credentials to write about this topic. The implications of this for me was that I had to choose relevant articles by reliable and qualified researchers. This was achieved by looking at the evidence of the articles and cross-referencing, if similar findings were found then authenticity of the research increased. During the process of choosing and evaluating articles many were ruled out due to: unreliable and/or unqualified researchers or authors, and articles that could not be verified by other sources. Online internet sources were somewhat helpful as they influenced my findings and outcome by allowing me to understand the topic on a basic level when commencing my research, however they were not crucial to my research process.

Books written by highly qualified teachers and professors were reliable and valid sources used and were helpful as they were easily accessed. These sources acted as a very useful tool giving more details on the topic specifically for teachers in a classroom environment which helped me define my topic further. These sources were also cross-referenced with my previous sources to increase the likelihood of accuracy and authenticity. The books accessed examined specifics of the issues involved in developing resilience and were more useful in answering my research question. For example, a book written by Melissa Stormont called “*Fostering Resilience in Young Children at risk for Failure*” detailed one of strongest key points in my outcome, that is, the necessity of positive relationships and a feeling of hope being significant determining factors to young children developing resilience. These books did not have the same limitations as the online articles as: (a) they were authored by credible professionals, (b) used reliable sources, (c) the authors were supported by convincing researched scientific and observational evidence (d) using clearly stated arguments, (e) were easy to access (f) and had no planning required or time limitations. These books were valuable as a source as they had the intention of providing unbiased information and not being persuasive, explaining relevant issues on the topic from different perspectives. The implication of these sources was (a) they influenced my outcome and (b) assisted me come to the conclusion that I reached by providing a lot of the information needed to understand this topic and (c) how to address and write a report on resilience.

Primary sources, which consisted of interviews were another research process which I used to write my outcome. Interviews were conducted with and by teachers of children in this 4-6 age bracket. These results were significant to my outcome as I was able to ask specific questions to gain the information I required which led me to find key findings about practically teaching resilience in a classroom environment. The questionnaires aided my understanding of how resilience was discernible within the classroom and the specific techniques teachers use in their classrooms to develop this. The only limitation of these interviews was the appropriateness of the questions. These interviews were useful and relevant to my topic and heavily contributed to my outcome as the information which was obtained from these interviews was then applied to a case study.

The case study, another primary process which I undertook, consisted of observing children in play and asking them some basic questions. This was beneficial in that I could practically visualise the concepts which were discussed in my sources. This helped me to conceptualise the topic and structure my outcome. However, the case study was not regarded as a reliable source as: (a) the interview was completely framed by myself and (b) I was unaware of the specific traits in children that I was to observe and make judgements on to determine resilience. This meant that I did not use the information I gathered in my outcome, but it was still useful in contributing to understanding the topic to be able to structure and write my outcome.

E2-Evaluation of decisions made in response to challenges/opportunities:

Throughout these research process, I was faced with many challenges and opportunities that I had to navigate by making decisions which could best affect my outcome.

From the outset of this research project I had planned to conduct interviews. I faced two challenges whilst trying to gather this information. Initially I planned to email a highly qualified author of one of my sources to ask her for more specific information, but due to a lack of response I needed to find this information elsewhere. This, however, was not an insurmountable issue as from the start of choosing a topic I made sure that I would have many opportunities for interviews, as I ensured I already had personal contacts in the field that I was going to go into, so that if a problem arose, like it did, the consequences of this could be minimalised in my overall research. After writing my interview questions I then had to approach people to complete this and this is where I faced my next challenge - for these interviews to be reliable it was not an issue of credentials, as I would only be interviewing experienced and qualified teachers, it was an issue of my interview addressing the right questions and approaching them correctly. To navigate this obstacle I wrote the interview using all prior research I had done so I could approach these question with my newly-gained understanding of the topic. This proved to be a fairly effective method, as through my decisions these challenges were navigated successfully.

One of my main issues from the outset of commencing this research project, was to gather enough primary sources. I planned to conduct a case study as I was able to get access to a classroom and students easily. The issue was that I was unsure of how to conduct the case study to determine resilience in children as resilience is a theoretical and intangible construct and to conduct a case study was difficult to plan to cover the concepts required. I overcame this issue by talking to one of my interviewees and they helped me plan the case study and suggested question to ask the children that would provide the specific information I would be looking for. The result of this was that I was able to successfully conduct my case study to a higher level of efficiency than had I not have received help from this qualified teacher. This case study helped me in writing my outcome by allowing me to have a personal connection and application of this topic.

E3-Evaluation of research outcome:

My final outcome was constructed by incorporating a variety of primary and secondary sources to correctly and fully conclude my research question. My research question was answered to the best of my ability by incorporating all key finding found during the process. However, due to a large topic, a word count and time limitations, this was not achieved to a professional high standard.

A strength of my outcome was the way in which I was able to structure my essay under topics and sub-topics which were found throughout my research. This allowed me too clearly display the key findings which I had researched in an ordered manner, which also made reading my outcome easier to understand and follow. A weakness in my outcome was the sheer size of the topic itself. This meant that I was unable to cover every aspect, no matter how many I did incorporate, due to the complexity of this issue. This limited my findings, and made the outcome not as precise or reliable as it could have been. This also made writing the outcome difficult as I did not have all the required information.

My outcome is not reliable or credible as I am a Year 12 student with no credentials and have limited knowledge or experience with the topic of resilience. Also, bias can seldom be ruled out of a source, no matter how I tried to avoid this whilst writing my outcome. This outcome provided nothing new to society in way of new information, but it did provide knowledge and helped me in this area, and if I can apply the things which I learnt about developing resilience when I am teacher, this will eventually contribute to society.

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