Chapter 17
Making It Real and Making It Last! Sustainability of Teacher Implementation of a Whole-School Resilience Programme

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Abstract Life for children and young people in the twenty-first century includes the need to master the usual developmental hurdles along with relatively new challenges such as cyber safety, greater family mobility, higher levels of family breakdown and easier access to addictive drugs and alcohol. These contemporary challenges have prompted widespread interest from governments, policymakers and educators around the world into how educational policy and school practices can help children and young people develop greater resilience. This chapter reviews the importance of resilience for both teachers and students. It then draws on lessons learned from the implementation over 5–12 years of a whole-school resilience programme in ten schools. The research findings demonstrate that a combination of school factors, school system factors and programme-specific factors facilitate all teachers' implementation of a resilience programme. This same combination of factors was also found to be crucial for the capacity of the school to sustain the implementation of the programme over many years and thus achieve positive outcomes for both students and staff.

One of the most important goals for any country is to enable its children and young people to lead happy and fulfilling lives and develop the skills to be resilient in the face of challenges, setbacks and difficult times. Life for children and young people in the twenty-first century not only means mastering the usual developmental hurdles but also managing relatively new challenges. These new challenges include

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cyber safety, greater family mobility, higher levels of family breakdown and easier access to addictive illicit drugs and alcohol. The unrest in the Middle East has led to recent widespread displacement of families as well as the increased terrorist radicalisation of youth through the Internet. These contemporary challenges have prompted increasing interest from governments, policymakers and educators around the world in how educational policy and school practices can help children and young people develop greater resilience.

This chapter reviews the importance of resilience for children and young people. It then draws on lessons learned from the implementation and sustainability of one specific whole-school resilience programme. Interviews were conducted in ten schools that have been implementing the resilience programme for between 5 and 12 years. The research findings demonstrate that a combination of school factors, school system factors and programme-specific factors can facilitate teachers' implementation of a resilience programme. This same combination of factors was also found to be crucial for the capacity of the school to sustain the implementation of the programme over many years and thus achieve positive outcomes for both students and staff.

Why Does Student Resilience Matter?

The health and wellbeing of a country's young people are at the heart of a country's wellbeing. As Elias has noted 'in every society, children will inherit social roles now occupied by adults. Our education systems have the job of preparing children for this eventual responsibility' (Elias 2003, p. 6). Global figures show that about 10% of young people have a diagnosable mental disorder. Given that approximately one-third of the world's population is under 18 years of age (UNICEF 2014), this represents over 220 million children (WHO 2003; Global Burden of Disease Study 2012). Over half of the children who experience mental illness in childhood will also suffer from a mental illness in their adult lives (Kim-Cohen et al. 2003; Layard and Hagell 2015). In the richest countries, only 25% of children with mental health issues receive specialist help. In the poorest countries, very few have access to any help at all (Layard and Hagell 2015). From a humanitarian perspective, this is a great loss, but it also creates an economic cost. In most countries mental illness is reducing gross domestic product (GDP) by over 5% (OECD 2014). Given that the aim of all countries is to enable their children to be educated within a school context, a core concern for all schools around the world needs to be how they can best develop their students' sense of wellbeing and resilience in order to support both their academic performance and their mental health.

Do Schools Have a Role to Play in Developing Student Resilience?

Schools are important social institutions for helping young people to develop their wellbeing and resilience. Children and adolescents spend much of their waking time in school. For example, in Australia, 5–18-year-olds typically spend 30–35 h per week in school. What children learn at school and the relationships they establish in their day-to-day interactions and experiences with their peers and teachers are integral to their wellbeing. Understanding the conditions and processes that contribute to wellbeing and resilience in individuals, groups and institutions is at the core of the relatively new discipline of positive psychology (Gable and Haidt 2005), and increasingly educators are now looking to the subdiscipline of positive education for direction.

Traditionally a country's prosperity has been equated with a country's wealth. Martin Seligman, one of the founders of positive psychology, has stated that the time has come for a new prosperity 'that combines well-being with wealth. Learning to value and to attain this new prosperity must start early—in the formative years of schooling— and it is this new prosperity, kindled by Positive Education, that the world can now choose' (Seligman 2011, p. 97).

Positive education is defined by Seligman et al. (2009) as education for both traditional skills and for happiness. We define positive education as:

> The integration of the core principles of Positive Psychology with the evidence-informed structures, practices and programs that enhance both wellbeing and academic achievement. The aim of positive education is to enable all members of a school community to succeed and prosper (Noble and McGrath 2015, p. 4; Noble and McGrath 2016, p. 19)

What Is Resilience?

All students face some kind of adversity at one time or another. The development of resilience in the face of adversity involves a developmental progression in which new challenges, vulnerabilities and opportunities emerge with changing circumstances at different times in one's life. Typically the challenges that children face are related to changes or losses associated with family or friendship, concerns in relation to academic performance as well as setbacks and disappointments when things don't go their way in other areas of their lives. Some students have more serious adversity to deal with such as ongoing poverty and disadvantage, abuse or serious illness. Luthar (2006) has warned that children can sometimes seem resilient in terms of their behaviours but might still struggle with inner distress in the form of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. It is important to recognise that resilience is a multi-faceted developmental process that is not fixed or immutable (Cicchetti 2010, p. 146) and is influenced by a range of different factors.

We define resilience as:

> The ability to persist, cope adaptively and bounce back after encountering change, challenges, setback, disappointments, difficult situations or adversity and to return to a reasonable level of wellbeing. It is also the capacity to respond adaptively to difficult circumstances and still thrive (Noble and McGrath 2015, p. 13).

Our model of resilience includes the environmental protective factors that contribute to a child's resilience as well as the personal skills of resilience that can be taught and strengthened. Protective factors are considered to be those that may reduce or mitigate the negative impact of risk factors (Kim-Cohen 2007). One of the strongest protective environmental factors that help children to become more resilient is feeling connected to their family, school and community.

There is a wealth of research that highlights the important role that schools can play in helping to provide the type of safe, protective and supportive environment which is especially important for those children who may be more at risk. Being connected to school includes feeling connected to both teachers and peers. School connectedness is linked to increased student engagement and participation in school (O'Shaughnessy et al. 2003; Osterman 2000), higher levels of academic achievement (e.g. Catalano et al. 2003; Severson and Walker 2002; Zins et al. 2004), completing school (Bond et al. 2007; Zins et al. 2004) and exhibiting less disruptive or antisocial behaviour (Lonczak et al. 2002; Zins et al. 2004). School connectedness is also linked to lower rates of health-risking behaviour and mental health problems (Bond et al. 2007; Catalano et al. 2003; Lonczak et al. 2002; Zins et al. 2004). The personal skills and attitudes that have the potential to contribute to wellbeing and academic success include helpful and positive thinking skills and attitudes, skills and beliefs related to being resourceful and being self-regulated and adaptive, social-emotional learning skills and having a sense of personal competence (McGrath and Noble 2003, 2011). Skills for being resilient can be seen as essential for both academic and personal success in school and in life.

Evaluating Resilience-Based Programs for Schools

Well-developed and well-implemented, school-based resilience programs have been shown to produce a range of positive effects on children's academic, behavioural and social-emotional functioning. The findings of a large-scale meta-analysis of social and emotional learning (SEL) programs (Durlak et al. 2011) confirmed the positive impact of school-based social and emotional learning programs on learning and achievement. This meta-analysis focused on 213 school-based, universal social-emotional learning programs and involved over 270,000 students from primary school entry to year 12. Compared to controls, students who had participated in social-emotional learning programs demonstrated, on average, an 11-percentile-point gain in academic achievement as well as demonstrating significant

improvements in their social and emotional skills, attitudes and behaviour within the school context.

Similarly Diekstra and Gravesteijn (2008) conducted a large worldwide meta-analysis of 19 meta-analyses (published between 1997 and 2008) evaluating the effectiveness of student wellbeing programs that focused on teaching social and emotional skills. The studies had focused on either primary or secondary schools and comprised many hundreds of thousands of students. Their conclusions were similar to those of Durlak et al. (2011), namely, that such programs significantly enhanced students' social and emotional competence and their connection to the school reduced or prevented behaviour and mental health problems or disorders and significantly enhanced academic achievement. Students from low socio-economic status and different ethnic backgrounds benefited at least as much as other students (and often more).

More recently the World Health Organization commissioned a review of mental health promotion interventions in low- and middle-income countries (Barry et al. 2013, including Gaza/Palestine, South Africa, Uganda, India, Chile, Mauritius, Nepal and Lebanon. The majority of the studies (>60%) were published between 2010 and 2012. Findings from the 14 school-based interventions indicated reasonably robust evidence that school-based programs implemented in these diverse countries can have significant positive effects on students' emotional and behavioural wellbeing, including reduced depression and anxiety and improved coping skills.

All these meta-analyses of studies from around the world demonstrate the great potential of school-based social-emotional learning programs for making a significant impact on the wellbeing and resilience of young people. They are based on the premise that when children have the opportunity to learn the skills of resilience in the early years of schooling, they have a greater chance of lifelong wellbeing.

However a number of researchers in this area have also identified some key concerns. Most programs target only one age cohort in a school and are implemented for only a short time. They may produce good results in the short term, but these results are often not sustained over time. This is not surprising given that the programs typically average 20 h duration (Durlak et al. 2011; Barry et al. 2013). Barry et al. (2013) also expressed concern that the programs were generally limited in their scope in terms of the program's focus, the short-term nature of the intervention and the small number of students who had access to the intervention. Even if prior research demonstrates a strong evidence base for a particular programme, there is no guarantee the programme will be effective when implemented in a different setting or different social or cultural context. Barry's review recommended that the interventions be expanded to regional and national levels and inform a country's national educational and health policies (Barry et al. 2013).

In their evaluation of school-based resilience programs, Hart and Heaver (2013), based in the UK, were particularly critical of what happens when the funded resilience research project is completed and external resources supporting the resilience program's intervention are withdrawn. They found that most interventions in their review were researcher-led and that 7 of the 12 interventions in the research implementation phase did not even include the teachers who would be the people working

with the students at the end of the research period. They concluded that most interventions were of no practical use to any educators wishing to replicate and implement the programme in a normal educational context. From the perspective of educational practitioners, such as teachers and classroom assistants, reviews of research under these conditions can be 'frustrating, difficult to digest and hard to learn from' and thus 'present serious challenges' to practitioners in terms of continuing implementation (Hart and Heaver 2013).

Similar criticisms have been voiced in the USA (e.g. Han and Weiss 2005; Elias 2003). Most of the programs in large-scale meta-analyses conducted by Durlak et al. (2011) were American-based research projects, financially supported by US government research grants or other sources of funding external to the school system. Durlak (2015), one of the leaders in the science of the implementation of social-emotional learning programs, has written about the complexity of this type of research. He stated: 'the 8 components of implementation, the over 20 contextual factors potentially affecting implementation, and the 14 steps necessary to achieving effective implementation leave a staggering array of possible permutations that could affect any attempt at implementation' (p. 1124). He added 'Unfortunately, we do not know the most effective implementation threshold for different evidence-based interventions or whether this threshold varies over time' (p. 1125).

Contemporary educational research constantly affirms that what happens inside the regular classroom is what will have the greatest impact on student's learning and indeed on school and system improvement (Hattie 2012; Marzano 2007; Munby and Fullan 2016). Academic improvement as well as social and emotional improvement is more likely when teachers (rather than external consultants or professionals) implement a social-emotional learning programme (Durlak et al. 2011; Weissberg and O'Brien 2004). Hence there is a significant need for research that looks at the 'real-world' school and programme factors that are most likely to contribute to classroom teachers' implementation of social-emotional/resilience programs and what factors facilitate the ongoing implementation of such programs over many years. This type of research also acknowledges that the typical process of 'real-world' programme implementation in schools is not always linear and often recycles through adoption, training, implementation, integration and maintenance (Scheirer 2012).

The Focus of This Research

The research outlined in this section sought to identify the features of the school, the school system and the programme itself that had contributed to the implementation and the sustainability of one specific resilience programme in the 'real world'. None of the ten primary schools in this study were involved in a funded research project nor received any other kind of specific funding support. The ten primary schools that were selected as the focus of this research had all been implementing the Bounce Back Wellbeing and Resilience Programme (McGrath and Noble 2003, 2011) for between 5 and 12 years. Nine of the schools were implementing the

programme as a whole-school initiative taught to all students from the foundation year (first year of primary) through to year 6 (final year of primary). One K–12 school did not include students in year 6. Four of the schools were state government primary schools, three were Catholic primary schools, and three were independent private schools.

A research assistant funded by the program's publisher contacted the ten schools which had been identified as successful long-term users of the programme and who were willing to be interviewed. She initially contacted the schools in order to identify the teacher in charge of each school's implementation of the programme. These ten coordinators (including one who was also the principal) were then contacted to confirm their interest in participating in the study. Two additional classroom teachers also participated, at their request, in the interview conducted with one of the schools. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed, and university ethics clearance was obtained. Information sheets and consent forms were then mailed to each of the 12 participants.

The research assistant then conducted a 20–30 min phone interview with the 12 teachers. The focus of the interviews was the identification of the factors that were perceived by the schools to have contributed to their school's successful implementation and ongoing sustainability of the Bounce Back classroom resiliency programme.

Overview of the Bounce Back Classroom Resiliency Programme

The first edition of the Bounce Back! programme, which was published in 2003, was the world's first comprehensive, whole-school positive education programme. It aimed to build protective, supportive and respectful school communities as well as teach students the social and emotional skills that underpin both resilience and wellbeing. The programme integrates a combination of the core principles of CBT (cognitive behaviour therapy; Beck 1979) and REBT (rational emotive behaviour; Ellis and Dryden 2007) with the specific skills that underpin resilience and wellbeing and the evidence-based foundations of positive education. It was developed as a multi-faceted early prevention resilience programme for children from kindergarten (5 years old) to early adolescence (14 years old) and includes three volumes of age-appropriate curriculum lessons, activities, games and other resources across three levels i.e. years K–2, years 3–4 and years 5–8. It is a whole-school universal programme that aims to assist teachers to embed the teaching of resilience within the academic curriculum. It incorporates:

- Evidence-based pedagogy, especially relationship-focused teaching strategies such as cooperative learning (e.g. Roseth et al. 2008).
- The teaching of critical and creative thinking skills.
- The use of an extensive collection of (mostly) award-winning children's literature.

All three levels of the programme include the following nine curriculum units:

1. The *Core Values* unit encourages children to be honest, fair, kind, cooperative and respectful of self and others and be inclusive and accepting of individual differences.
2. The *People Bouncing Back* outlines and details the Bounce Back acronym which consists of ten coping statements based mainly on the principles of cognitive behaviour therapy. The focus is on teaching children to think realistically, positively and flexibly about problems and challenges.
3. The *Looking on the Bright Side* unit focuses on the teaching of optimistic thinking skills and the importance of gratitude (as highlighted in positive psychology).
4. The *Courage* unit teaches 'everyday' courage of having a go at something that is challenging despite experiencing fear or anxiety. It includes activities that highlight that everyday courage is different to heroism, thrill-seeking and foolhardy behaviour.
5. The *Emotions* unit encourages children to have empathy for others and teaches skills for managing uncomfortable emotions (such as anxiety and anger) and for amplifying positive emotions.
6. The *Relationships* unit teaches skills for making and keeping friends as well as managing conflict.
7. The *Humour* unit incorporates ideas for building class connectedness and positive emotions through humour using 'a giggle gym' and other activities. The unit also focuses on the appropriate use of humour as a coping strategy and highlights the difference between humour that is helpful and humour that is hurtful or trivialises a difficult situation.
8. The *No Bullying* unit helps children to identify and safely manage face-to-face and cyberbullying behaviour and teaches skills for acting confidently and assertively and skills for supporting others who are being bullied.
9. The *Success* unit provides activities that enable children to identify their character and ability strengths and also teaches skills and strategies for goal setting, persistence, effort and overcoming obstacles. It also encourages students to gain a sense of meaning and purpose through contributing to class and community activities.

Findings and Discussion

The names of the schools were removed from the transcripts and each of the ten schools was allocated a number from one to ten by the research assistant. Three researchers independently coded the data and then together agreed on the main

themes based on the commonality of keywords and categories. The themes that emerged were then organised and categorised as either school-based factors, school system factors or programme-specific factors.

School-Based Factors

The strongest school-based factors that were perceived by schools as supporting the effective implementation and long-term sustainability of the programme are summarised in Table 17.1.

Table 17.1 shows that the wellbeing coordinators in all the participating schools placed a high priority on student wellbeing and social-emotional learning. All school leaders in the ten schools provided leadership support for the programme, and the schools kept parents informed about the programme. Nine of the coordinators perceived that student wellbeing and students' social-emotional skills underpinned effective academic learning, nine of the schools had provided opportunities for teachers' professional learning that supported their teaching of the programme, and nine of the schools advocated a weekly designated Bounce Back lesson. Eight of the coordinators gave examples of how they facilitated the teachers' implementation of the programme, and seven spoke about how the programme linked to other school initiatives.

Table 17.1 School-based factors identified by participating schools as contributing to their success in implementing and sustaining the programme

School-based factors	Number of schools endorsing it
1. Prioritising student wellbeing and social-emotional learning	10
2. The importance of full leadership support for the programme	10
3. Adopting a whole-school approach	10
4. Keeping parents informed about the programme and its contents through newsletter and meetings	10
5. A belief by school leaders and teachers that social and emotional learning and student wellbeing underpin effective academic learning	9
6. Opportunities for staff to undertake professional learning that supported their teaching of the programme	9
7. Having a weekly designated lesson (once per week or more often) for teaching the programme	9
8. The supporting role of key people within the school who undertook actions that facilitated implementation and maintained its profile within the school over time	8
9. Linking the programme to other components of the school e.g. school values, behaviour management policy, school improvement plan, assembly awards	7

Prioritising Student Wellbeing and Social and Emotional Learning

A school's vision predicts its priorities and is anchored in the values and ethics of the whole school community. According to Leithwood et al. (2004), an effective school leader builds a shared vision for the direction their school should take, identifies effective ways to develop staff and redesigns the organisation of their school to align with the school vision. The wellbeing coordinators in all ten schools perceived that student wellbeing was a school priority: 'it is our number one priority', 'student wellbeing is at the forefront of our school priorities', and 'it is our school's highest priority'.

Four of the schools explicitly stated how the focus on student wellbeing underpinned their schools' values. Nine of the schools also saw that the social-emotional learning skills that facilitate student wellbeing were also essential for academic learning: 'If you can't get social-emotional stability and wellbeing, our students won't learn'. Brackett et al. (2012) have suggested that, since teachers' beliefs about SEL have been shown to significantly influence programme implementation and outcomes, school leaders should assess the 'readiness' of their school and its teachers to implement and support a selected SEL programme. They have suggested some ideas that could be used in written survey questions (Brackett et al. 2012). However it could be argued that in some cases such an assessment could be carried out more informally as has occurred in these schools.

Adopting a Whole-School Approach

School-based programs that adopt a whole-school approach have been found to more likely be effective, especially when they focus on the promotion of mental health rather than the prevention of mental illness (Wells et al. 2002). The teaching of the Bounce Back programme to all students at every year level in the primary school was identified by all ten schools in this study as a major factor in the successful implementation and sustainability of the programme. For nine schools this was for all grades from kindergarten to year 6; for one school it was from pre-school to year 5. The wellbeing coordinators believed that this whole-school commitment enabled them to provide a consistent message and more effectively embed the language of resilience across their whole school community.

The whole-school approach also provided the opportunity for five of the schools to allocate the same curriculum topic (e.g. People Bouncing Back) for a designated few weeks. These wellbeing coordinators saw that this designated topic provided school-wide opportunities to provide consistent messages about resilience across the whole school community. Some examples include the wellbeing coordinator sending out a reminder to staff in the staff newsletter, developing a scope and sequence of lessons from K to 6; notifying parents in the parent newsletters and

including weekly assembly items on the topic (mentioned by three or the ten schools: 'each class presents a snippet at assembly depending on the topic').

Another coordinator talked about how their school's whole-school approach was supported by the introduction of a Bounce Back Award to students across all year levels. The award was seen as a way to maintain the profile of the programme across the school:

> We regularly at assembly present children with the Bounce Back Award, where they're given a certificate – and it might be something that we've seen in the schoolyard, in the classrooms. Teachers might nominate a particular student because they've seen them 'bounce back' after a bit of a challenge… And so the children can see then that, hey that's something that's important.

Leadership support for a whole-school approach was also illustrated by the school's organisational structures and, in particular, the school timetable. Nine of the ten schools allocated a designated time once a week for Bounce Back lessons (and in some cases more often) in the school timetable:

- 'Everyone has one lesson a week. It's expected that it's taught explicitly once a week, but then that it's successfully woven throughout the rest of the curriculum'.
- 'Bounce Back lessons are compulsory, not negotiable'.
- 'One hour a week is essential and then we also address key concepts in other curriculum areas or playground as required'.
- 'Bounce Back lessons are just as important as Maths and Reading blocks'.

Leadership Support for Implementation and Maintenance

In their role as leaders of their school, principals serve as both the 'gatekeepers' and 'promoters' of new programs (Hallinger and Heck 1996). The principal's support for a programme can significantly affect the quality of the teachers' implementation of that programme (Gottfredson and Gottfredson 2002; Han and Weiss 2005). All ten schools in this study perceived that the ongoing support for Bounce Back by their leadership team was an essential component of the successful implementation and sustainability of the programme in their school.

The school leaders offered a variety of practical support across the ten schools in order to facilitate their teachers' implementation of the programme. In all but one of the schools, the principal had assigned a key person who was a member of their school executive or leadership team to be responsible for overseeing all the teachers' implementation of the programme: For example, one wellbeing coordinator explained that 'The assistant principal has a major commitment to the programme and has a team of four pivotal people maintaining it'.

All coordinators articulated the importance of facilitating teachers' implementation of the programme. Five coordinators explicitly spoke about the importance of making it as easy as possible for the teachers to implement the programme. For

example, one coordinator provided support by mapping the Bounce Back units to curriculum outcomes and compiled a glossary of key terms so that all teachers were using the same definition (e.g. of courage). Several described how they printed off handouts for student workshops and provided staff with key resources that they needed.

Several coordinators outlined how they used structured staff meetings to maintain the program's profile, conduct professional learning about aspects of the programme, encourage staff to share innovative ideas for teaching the programme and introduce teachers to new picture books. As one coordinator said, you need to 'present it, resource it, and package it for teachers so it is easy to go'. The key message from all these comments is that making it as easy as possible for their staff to teach the programme produced more effective implementation.

Taking a whole-school approach also facilitated the school leadership's capacity to link the programme to other school components such as the academic curriculum, (especially language and literature) and the school's positive behaviour management policy and the school's values programme. Eight of the coordinators explicitly stated that assisting teachers to make those links had contributed to their successful implementation of the programme. Leadership commitment was also demonstrated by ensuring that all teachers in the ten schools were given their own individual copies of the relevant *Bounce Back! Teacher Resource Book*.

Opportunities for Professional Learning and Induction of New Staff

Professional development for teachers in regard to the programme has been widely recognised as a significant determinant of success in school programme implementation (Han and Weiss 2005; McCormick et al. 1995). Six of the ten schools referred to receiving some training in the Bounce Back programme, two schools had received some training in social-emotional learning, and one school had received intensive training in positive education but not in the programme itself. However no school had received more than 1 day of training on the programme, and there were no schools in which all teachers currently at their school had received formal training in the programme. This is significantly different to what occurs in many well-funded research projects (Durlak et al. 2011).

Two challenges identified by the school coordinators were the need for induction of new staff and strategies for maintaining the whole school momentum for implementing the programme. Example:

> We do have a stable staff but there are a couple of new teachers who come in and out every year, so it's been really important to make sure that they learn about Bounce Back in their induction and to get their mentor teacher to come and give them that practical help and explain how it would be implemented over time.

The implication from this research is that if other factors such as leadership support for implementation and the program's attributes are strong, then these school and programme factors may compensate for the minimal teacher training.

Monitoring and Communication

Monitoring the implementation of any new programme has been found to produce much better outcomes (Dubois et al. 2002). One way of monitoring implementation is to provide in-classroom performance feedback, and this has also been shown to significantly impact on teachers' success in implementing a programme (Leach and Conto 1999; Han and Weiss 2005). Half of the coordinators highlighted the importance of monitoring the teachers' performance and progress in a supportive way. For example, one coordinator talked about observing different teachers' Bounce Back lessons and then engaging in follow-up discussion, and five of the coordinators talked about checking the teachers' work programme to ensure that it included reference to their Bounce Back lesson plans. One coordinator described how sometimes he and individual teachers taught selected lessons from the programme together:

> Every time there's a Positive Education lesson through Bounce Back, I'm in the room with the class. I'll go in and I'll spend 15 minutes with each of the classes, so the teachers can then use me as a resource while I'm there, or they can watch me – we can put the classes together. I can teach the programme. I can introduce it. I can work with them.

Another coordinator explained:

- 'The teachers have been using it for a long time. We need to maintain showing them how they can get the most out of it and making sure that they keep that up. That's been something we've really had to look at'.
- As one coordinator said: 'It's essential that the executive value the programme and we have a committee to keep its profile up'.

Another component of communication was keeping parents informed about the programme. All ten schools consistently keep parents informed about the programme and its contents through school newsletters, classroom meetings and/or parent evenings. Most coordinators also spoke about the fact that many parents also gave feedback to teachers about their observation of the positive behaviour changes they were seeing in their children within the family context.

School System Factors

A school's implementation of a programme does not occur within a vacuum but rather reflects and is strongly influenced by the policies and priorities of the school system they belong to. An important factor in the sustainability of any

social-emotional/resilience programme is how well the programme aligns with their school system's educational policy and priorities at either the regional, state or national level (Noble and McGrath 2015; Han and Weiss 2005; Adelman and Taylor 2003; Elias 2003; Coburn 2003).

Three of the ten schools were participating in 'KidsMatter', a national Australian government mental health initiative which aims to help schools to develop safe and supportive school communities and to teach the social and emotional skills that children and young people require to meet life's challenges and be resilient. As part of their role, KidsMatter makes available an online directory of programmes from which schools can select. These three KidsMatter schools had chosen Bounce Back because they perceived that the programme aligned well with the policy guidelines, recommendations and important research outcomes as outlined on the KidsMatter site. The KidsMatter research evaluation (Dix et al. 2009) on the benefits of social-emotional learning showed statistically and practically significant improvements in students' measured mental health in terms of both reduced mental health difficulties and increased mental health strengths. The impact of KidsMatter was especially apparent for students who were rated as having higher levels of mental health difficulties at the start of the trial (Dix et al. 2009). Two schools indicated that the Kidsmatter's evaluation of Bounce Back influenced their choice of the programme.

Three of the schools also had system support from their regional Catholic Education Office, which had made student wellbeing and social-emotional learning a very clear school system priority. This was reflected in this school system's strategic plan and explicit support for schools. For example, the system support included funding for each school's student wellbeing coordinator to complete a master's degree in student wellbeing and to attend a student wellbeing cluster group meeting that met once every school term for professional learning. These three schools perceived that Bounce Back fulfilled their school system's expectations for a whole-school focus on student wellbeing.

Programme-Specific Factors

As indicated in Table 17.2, all ten wellbeing coordinators expressed in different ways how the programme was user-friendly and easy to teach. The programme factors identified as important by all the coordinators were the structure of the programme and the program's use of high-quality children's literature that allowed the teachers to embed the teaching in the primary curriculum. The flexibility as well as the multifactored nature of the programme was also seen by nine of the coordinators as the programme features that contributed to their long-term implementation of the programme.

Table 17.2 Programme features identified by participating schools as contributing to their success in implementing and sustaining the programme

Programme features	Number of schools endorsing this factor
User-friendly and easy to teach	10
Importance of the high quality children's picture books junior novels and follow-up literature and language activities	9
The structure of the programme and the consistency of key messages	9
Multi-faceted approach in each unit and links to a range of curriculum areas (e.g. maths, science, music, art)	9
Flexible, adaptable and can be customised to fit with other aspects of the school and classroom	9

Discussions of these programme attributes are organised under four broad programme factors that have been identified in the research literature as characterising sustainable teacher-implemented classroom prevention and intervention programmes in mental health (Han and Weiss 2005). Teachers are more motivated to implement and continue teaching a programme when:

- It is acceptable to their school and to themselves as practitioners and doesn't require too much time or effort.
- It is effective in making a difference.
- It is feasible and can be implemented on an ongoing basis with 'minimal but sufficient' resources.
- It is flexible and adaptable.

Acceptability of the Programme to the Schools and Their Teachers

Teachers' evaluation of the acceptability of a programme significantly influences not only their preparedness to implement a new programme but also the extent to which they implement it accurately (Durlak et al. 2011; Han and Weiss 1995; Reimers et al. 1987). The widespread acceptability of Bounce Back by the teachers in this study appears to be one of the most significant factors in its sustained implementation in these ten schools. A number of key features of this programme appear to have contributed to this teacher acceptability. Firstly teachers perceived that it was important to teach resilience to their students. Examples of the coordinators' comments include:

- 'I think resilience is a really important concept. I think that's why Bounce Back has stayed as a programme in our school'.
- 'It makes sense and it's really relevant to how to teach resilience to students'.
- 'We've all seen how resilience impacts on their learning'.

As one coordinator said, 'the programme has everyone's whole-hearted support'. The importance of whole-school acceptability of the programme is illustrated in the following quote from one of the coordinators who was the school principal:

> It's one of the few programs that the whole school is keen to work with and that's not really a common thing. Programs come in through schools all the time, we know that, but on a regular basis you find that it's not being used and so you put it on the shelf and you think, well, that was a waste of money. You might have some programs where a couple of teachers will use it and they swear by it but the rest of the school doesn't. Bounce Back is one programme where there's not one teacher at this school who does not use it.

A combination of programme-specific features appears to have contributed to high teacher acceptability of the programme. All ten schools perceived the programme to be teacher-friendly and easy to teach. For example:

> It has great lessons that are easy to implement;
> It's easy to teach because you get all that background information and worksheets that go with the lessons and Its use of child-friendly resources was important to us.

Another coordinator commented that 'The psychological and educational rigour that underpins the program' was also very important to their school.

The program's structure was identified as one of the most important factors that contributed to the resource being teacher-friendly, as illustrated by the following comments:

- 'The organisation of the units is really, really helpful, especially for teachers who have never really taught most of these skills before and its developmental sequence of units (across all three Teacher resource books) is really helpful'.
- 'The book's layout and the access to the research base behind is really easy to understand'.
- 'It has well-structured, thorough lessons'.
- 'The best thing is the structure of the programme and the lessons that develop competency and social and emotional skills'.
- 'The structure provides a consistency of key messages across year levels'.

The use of children's literature to teach the program's key messages was also identified by nine of the schools as another key factor that contributed to making the programme easy to teach e.g.:

- 'The literature element appeals to a lot of us'.
- 'I do think it's easy to teach. I choose a really enjoyable fabulous literature piece and I will teach ideas through that'.
- 'The children's picture books are the absolute stand out in the programme for me. They are all so relevant and the kids can relate to them so well'.
- 'Our teachers love its use of good children's literature'.
- 'The use of high quality children's picture books and follow-up literature and language activities is great'.

The use of children's literature to teach the resilience concepts was also seen as an essential factor for developing teacher confidence in using the programme.

> If you're not 100% sure you can start with the books (recommended children's literature) and then you can have your resource manual next to you. Then as you start going with the flow, you will start to learn the prompting questions that help to generate discussions, and you start getting ideas of your own.

Teacher confidence in teaching a programme has been shown to impact on the effort they are willing to give to planning and implementing a programme and persisting with teaching it despite setbacks (Tschannen-Moran et al. 1998). Teachers' investment in putting effort into the implementation of a programme is, in turn, more likely to lead to successful experiences with new strategies (Han and Weiss 2005). This is reflected in the following comment:

> I am more comfortable with Bounce Back now and I now take it to the next level …When you first start you're sort of dancing around as to how much you'll get out of the kids… I definitely now ask more challenging questions and provoke more detailed discussions because I now know what you can get from the children.

Programme Effectiveness

One of the most significant factors that has been shown to contribute to a program's acceptability from the teachers' perspective is that they perceive that the behaviour of their students has changed as a result of their implementation of the programme (Han and Weiss 2005; Datnow and Castellano 2000). Five of the teachers explicitly mentioned that the programme had helped their students learn the language of resilience as illustrated in the following comments:

- 'Giving the students the licence to use the language of resilience, and giving them the vocabulary through the range of activities, puts their wellbeing at the forefront of everything we do'.
- 'Helping children to learn the language of resilience so they learn to self-manage their own behaviour'.
- 'It's really clear terminology for even teaching kindergarten students. They like the idea of 'bouncing back' and the vocabulary is appropriate'.

Teachers also spoke about how they observed the children acting more resiliently:

- 'The children are now able to talk about Bounce Back quite clearly. And we've really can see it in their behaviour. … it's embedded in them and they talk about it, and they also put it into action as well'.
- 'The older kids now realise that what they think affects how they feel and affects those choices they make. For example looking on the bright side, using their thinking caps, learning from their mistakes and all those sort of things are really embedded in all the kids, so that's good. They almost do it automatically now and they don't put their heads down and sulk if something goes wrong. They are definitely more resilient'.

One of the participating school communities had been adversely affected by very severe bushfires which involved a significant loss of life. The coordinator spoke about how the programme helped the children build relationships, support each other and be more resilient:

> One of the first years I taught Bounce Back I had Grade six boys, and I had some of the grade six boys crying in the room, and it was just phenomenal because one boy was one of the kids, who was one of the hierarchy if you know what I mean, and all the other kids turned around and said 'my goodness, we didn't realise that he actually had issues as well'. That sort of changed the class dynamics around and really helped the children be more resilient.

Another coordinator expressed how teaching the programme helped her connect more with her students: 'I just reckon I've become a lot closer to my kids'. A Scottish study (Axford et al. 2011) which conducted an evaluation of the impact of Bounce Back in 16 primary schools that had been implementing Bounce Back for 18 months concluded that one of the main effects of the programme was enhanced student-student relationships, enhanced teacher-student relationships and increased classroom connectedness. Positive student-teacher relationships have been found to be a key aspect of not only teachers' job satisfaction but also increased learning outcomes (Hagelskamp et al. 2013; Sutton and Wheatley 2003). Additionally, this Scottish study not only found an increase in student resilience and social skills but also identified a highly significant increase in teacher resilience and wellbeing as a result of their teaching the programme.

One of the ten coordinators in this current study spoke about how the teachers' belief in the effectiveness of the programme also had an impact on the children's response to the programme:

> I think the important thing is that our teachers really believe in it as well. And so when they're conducting their lesson, the children can see that too.

Eight of the ten schools reported observations by staff of more resilient student behaviours in class and in the playground and also noted that they had received feedback from many parents about their observations of their children behaving more resiliently at home. All ten schools perceived that the relationship-building pedagogy of cooperative learning strategies and circle time that underpinned the programme had also contributed to the effectiveness of the programme.

Feasibility: It Can Be Implemented on an Ongoing Basis with Minimal But Sufficient Resources

As well as being acceptable to the teachers and demonstrably effective, the Bounce Back programme was seen as practical and feasible for the teachers to implement in their classrooms. This was important given that none of the schools involved in this research received designated ongoing funding to specifically run the Bounce Back programme. One coordinator referred to 'being creative' in accessing current

infrastructure funding to provide some money to purchase an individual copy of the Bounce Back handbook for each classroom teacher. Another coordinator spoke about the benefits of only having to purchase one resource book for each teacher and not needing to purchase student workbooks that would be a recurring cost.

Flexibility and Adaptability

Each new school year brings a new cohort of students with diverse abilities, family situations, backgrounds and personal and educational needs. Classrooms and students may also change across a school year as students progress, deal with challenges or encounter difficulties. A dramatic example, as mentioned above, was that one of the schools interviewed had experienced severe bushfires in their area that had led to a significant loss of lives and properties. Hence, according to Han and Weiss (2005), a programme must be:

- Developed and structured in such a way that it can be flexible and readily adaptable for changing circumstances.
- Well enough understood by teachers so that they are able to adapt it without losing its core principles and key messages.

Adaptability can refer to either the provision of a range of options for teaching specific content or the addition or integration of content or teaching approaches that may depart from those outlined in the original programme. Nine of the schools perceived the flexibility and adaptability of the Bounce Back programme was one of its great strengths.

- 'It's a flexible programme that can be customised for your school and for specific students'.
- 'It (Bounce Back) has got room for creativity and it's open to your own individual way of teaching it slightly differently'.
- 'I've gone from grade six to grade three now and all of a sudden I had different problems. So now I've got a whole group of bossy girls in the grade three room. So of course I go to the Bounce Back programme and start looking up resources. We used the suggested children's literature that dealt with bossing each other and we've done things about how does it make you feel, how does it make other people feel, all that sort of stuff'.
- 'Teachers have become quite savvy about how to use Bounce Back for their particular areas of learning. They dip in and out of it. So when they observe behaviours of concern in a group of kids, they go 'okay I know that what's happening is about Success (a Bounce Back unit of work) so I'm going to access the list of resources and we're going to do some bits and pieces around that'. So I think that is really positive as a long-term issue. The teachers have been upskilled in a way that enables them to pinpoint what's available in Bounce Back and they can use it in a range of different settings or situations'.

In contrast to Bounce Back, one coordinator described a different social-emotional learning programme that was highly prescriptive: 'I remember looking at the (Named) programme and it was just horrendous. It was so prescriptive– you've got to do this at this time, and you've got to read this, and you've got to do that. It was so "staged" and so – it was just awful. With Bounce Back you start a talk and it creates so many incredible conversations amongst the kids, it's just incredible'.

The flexibility of the programme was also seen as an asset in that it enabled teachers to more easily integrate the programme with other curriculum areas and other school components and initiatives. One could argue that the more teachers adapt the programme, the more the essential principles of the programme may be diluted. Early implementation science advocated that teachers adhered rigorously to a programme with no adaptations (Durlak 2015). Now adaptations are seen as the rule in school-based research rather than the exception (Dusenbury et al. 2005; Ringwalt et al. 2003). This research indicated that as teachers developed confidence in teaching a programme, they made adaptations that then contributed to their greater commitment and sustainability in continuing to teach the programme. Perhaps the risk to dilution is less important than the benefits of teachers' ongoing commitment to teaching the programme.

Conclusions

A school-based focus on supporting children and young people to develop resilience is a central component of effective education for their future, their country's future and for the future of our world. Increasingly schools and teachers are being expected to deliver social-emotional learning programs that can enhance students' wellbeing, resilience and academic achievement. Hence it is critical that research identifies the school-based factors, school system factors and the programme-specific factors that contribute to the effective implementation and sustainability of such programs. The focus must be on what works in the real world of schools where there is no access to research funding.

This chapter has reviewed the key factors that contributed to the successful implementation and sustainability of one specific social and emotional learning programme (Bounce Back) in ten primary schools. Although it is a small qualitative study, it is the only study to our knowledge that reviews both the school and programme factors that has sustained the 'real-world' implementation of a social-emotional learning programme for up to 12 years without any research funding.

In summary, three categories of factors were identified as important in contributing to the implementation and sustainability of the programme. These three categories were school-based factors, school system factors and programme-specific factors. The school-based factors included the school leadership prioritising student wellbeing and social and emotional learning, adopting a whole-school approach to the implementation of the programme, providing leadership support for teachers'

implementation and maintenance of the programme, monitoring the teachers' implementation of the programme, communicating with parents about the programme and linking the programme with other school initiatives. The school system factors were varied and included support for three of the schools from the regional educational authority (Catholic schools) and three of the schools accessing support through a government mental health school-based initiative (KidsMatter).

However ultimately the success of a programme is not only dependent on leadership support for implementation but also on whether individual teachers effectively teach the programme in their classroom. Four programme attributes were identified as critical to promoting different teachers' sustained efforts to implement the programme effectively: the programme was acceptable to them because it was teacher-friendly and easy to implement; it was perceived to be effective in terms of enhancing their students' resilience, behaviour and engagement in their lessons; it was feasible to implement without significant extra funding or resourcing; and it was flexible in the different ways as it enabled teachers to adapt the lessons to meet the needs of their own students and the schools. In conclusion schools should consider incorporating the factors identified in this qualitative study when planning for effective implementation and sustainability.

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