Original Research Article

Exploring Technical Preservice Teachers'' Perspectives on Resilience in Beninese Secondary Schools

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	In this article, the researcher explores the perspectives of technical preservice teachers about their knowledge of resilience and their use of resilient techniques and practices in the classroom. Participants were selected from the Vocational and Technical Teacher Training School of Lokossa. The design of the study was qualitative hermeneutic and the focus group interview technique was used. The major findings were about the participants' lack of knowledge of the concept of resilience. However, despite this lack of knowledge, the majority of the participants (70%) mentioned the application of various practices that are related to the promotion of educational resilience and emphasized the importance of establishing a reinforced student-teacher relationship for support and affection. It is, therefore, capital that authorithies in teacher training schools set room, in the curricula, for preservice teachers' further preparation in understanding what resilience is and how to promote it.

Introduction

Resilience is, following Grotberg (1995, p. 13), defined as the improvement of the human being's capacity to face life's adversities, overcome them and be positively transformed by them. In this sense, resilience is determined by multiple factors, resulting from an interaction between protective factors, both inherent to the individual and external, and the risks that occur in people's lives (Werner and Smith, 2001). As Kotliarenco, Cáceres and Fontecilla (1997) summarized, vulnerability and protection processes lead to disorders or benefits and depend on their interaction with risk variables. So, facing difficult situations could be constructive and may even strengthen skills, develop persistence, and enjoy states of positive emotions such as the satisfaction generated by creative activities (Seligman, 1995). In this regard, Werner (1992), Henderson and Milstein (2003) indicated that individuals considered resilient, in most cases, have had a significant person with whom they have established positive links of acceptance and inclusion.

After the first investigations (Garmezy, 1971, 1984; Rutter, 1979, Werner and Smith, 1992) that gave rise to the concept of resilience, other researchers were interested in the school environment and the construction of resilience. For example, Waxman, Gray and Padrón (2003) described the term educational resilience as a process that can be promoted through factors that manage to positively affect the student's academic achievement. Among these factors are certain personal characteristics that, according to Benard (1993), are: social competence, problem solving skills, autonomy and life purpose. They are also known as protective factors that are conditions or environments, support and opportunities capable to favor the development of individuals or groups and to reduce the effects of unfavorable circumstances (Benard, 1993, 2004).

Furthermore, a distinction can be made between external protective factors and internal protective factors. The external ones refer to environmental conditions that act to reduce the probability of harm, such as: extended family, support from a significant adult, or social and work integration. On their part, the internal factors refer to the characteristics of the person: esteem, security and self-confidence, ease of communication and empathy (Benard, 2004). Therefore, the promotion of educational resilience implies the application of all those practices that constitute protective factors for the development of

resilience in students. This is where teachers play an important role in creating meaningful relationships with their students. Indeed, after the family, the school is the most conducive place for students to experience conditions that promote resilience (Waxman, Gray and Padrón, 2003). In this sense, school environments, teachers and educators in general can be resilience builders (Cunningham and Swanson, 2010; Henderson and Milstein, 2003; Tiet, Huizinga and Byernes, 2010). In fact, resilience is built in students in pleasant, calm, and trusting school environments with personal interactions that convey optimism and focus on their strengths (Benard, 2003). In fact, Benard (2003, 2004) stressed that the teacher plays a crucial role in this process, when he becomes a significant person for each student, and when he possesses knowledge and attitudes that allow him to carry out an accompaniment that consists of promoting and empowering its integral development.

However, Henderson and Milstein (2003) expressed that, in order for the teacher to promote resilience in the classroom, he must know what the concept means and use educational practices with the clear objective of promoting resilience.

Therefore, knowledge about what is resilience and how to apply educational practices conducive to its promotion are two key aspects of this study, whose purpose was to explore the knowledge and experiences during teaching practice about the application of practices that promote educational resilience of students enrolled in the Vocational and Technical Teacher Training School of Lokossa. Specifically, the students follow a university program, at the undergraduate level, which, upon completion, indicates that the student has completed all the educational requirements required to obtain the BAPET, the initial certification or degree to teach in secondary technical and vocational schools throughout the country.

In this program, one of the last steps is the Teaching practice. Indeed, the teaching practice is organized through internships in secondary schools where the student-teacher spends at least six weeks under the supervision of elder teachers and teachers and teacher advisors and then is let alone to deliver a class of one hour as his final exam. That is why the teaching practice is considered as the culminating laboratory experience, through which the student-teacher assumes the responsibility of teaching one or more subjects to groups of students at secondary level. Therefore, it is the experience that allows the teacher candidate to apply, in a real scenario, all the knowledge acquired during the different courses. Therefore, the following questions arise:

1) What knowledge about resilience do the student-teachers have during their teaching practice?

2) What are the experiences of the student-teachers regarding the application of practices promoting educational resilience during their teaching practice?

Literature review
Background
In Benin, education has been influenced by various laws starting from the compulsory education provided by the constitution. As a result, more and more focus is put on increased forms of accountability for student achievement; expansion of options and information for parents or caregivers; increased focus on teacher qualifications, flexibility, and an emphasis on the use of strategies and programs that prove to be effective. Along with these provisions, professionals in the field of education are constantly challenged to improve their skills, meet the needs of students and carry out research to promote more effective teaching methods. At that time, academic achievement is the focus of attention and action at the local and national level.

To meet the goals set, schools had to work to remove the emotional, behavioral, and academic barriers that interfere with student success. Indeed, as it was pointed out, the school is the place where children and young people develop their social and academic skills. In addition, it is where young people have to learn to deal with peer pressure, while also learning to integrate into society and become more independent from home.

Therefore, the school, like the family, plays a fundamental role in the formation of competences that allow them to have better relationships with themselves and with others (Hamre and Pianta, 2001; Waxman, Gray and Padrón, 2003) because it constitutes the space where each student can develop prosocial ties, positive attitudes as well as values and strengthen all the potentialities that make up protective elements when facing difficult or adversity situations (Benard, 2003 and Schoon, 2006).

In parallel, trends in the field of education look at promoting educational resilience as a prevention alternative to school dropout (Downey, 2008; Salichs, 2002). In fact, the statistics of the 2013 Population Census (INSAE, 2014) reflected that a high percentage of the population aged 18 to 24 has a lower level of education than a secondary school diploma. Likewise,

among the population of 25 years of age, some more than 40% percent have a lesser degree of education. In general, the highest percentage of school dropouts is at the secondary level (Rivas, 2008). In sum, dropping out of school is a problem in Benin that implies the need to use different retention strategies; therefore, in matters of promoting educational resilience in the classroom, teacher training is part of these strategies.

However, the problem arises when teachers do not know what resilience is and how to promote it in the classroom. The role of teachers does not lie in instructing or teaching content, but rather social reality challenges them to make interventions that use strategies that allow them to cover the intellectual and affective needs of their students (Benard, 2004; Hamre and Pianta, 2001). For this reason, it is emphasized that intervention strategies include the development of aspects of resilience (Goldstein and Brooks, 2013; Miller, 2008). For its part, the World Health Organization (WHO) (2004) established that the initiative to carry out interventions based on the resilience approach is crucial to promote the integral development of students. However, Green, Oswald, and Spears (2007) found that teachers may exhibit lack of knowledge and myths about how to promote resilience. As Koller and Bertel (2006) suggested, the problem arises when there is a need to build resilience, but teachers are not prepared or trained in this area. For example, Green, Oswald, and Spears (2007) studied teacher perceptions of resilience building through a mixed design using a scale on resilience promotion, administered to 57 teachers, and used a focus group of 14 teachers. The results showed that although these teachers had some understanding of the meaning of resilience and expressed a strong desire to help their students deal with adversity, they still presented myths and doubts about the process of developing resilience, as well as what the characteristics of a resilient person were. Participants were able to describe students at risk of failure, but did not state that a student, despite being at risk, could get ahead and achieve good academic achievement. Therefore, the authors suggested that the concept of resilience and the process of its development be discussed and clarified not only in professional development workshops, but also earlier, in teacher preparation courses, so that they can understand the complexity of this concept and its role in promotion.

At the same time, a criticism of teacher preparation programs is that Psychology courses focus more on providing an understanding of the various theories rather than applying them to the school setting. Faced with this, Koller and Bertel (2006) pointed out that the competences of graduates must include understanding the following topics: promoting resilience, what is mental health and what relevance it has in school; the difference between mental health and mental illness; the importance of emotional and social health; creating an emotionally healthy classroom; mental health interventions in schools; prevention of school violence; individual and group crisis intervention and teacher well-being management.

Resilience Knowledge: Teacher Preparation and Role
Teachers' knowledge of resilience and the formal preparation they receive should reflect not only a general definition of what resilience is, but also an understanding of how to promote it in the classroom (Milller, 2008; Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003). This situation makes the preparation of teachers on resilience worthwhile before they enter the professional field, as explained by Crespo (2010):

> *Building and promoting resilience from school requires teachers to be a resilience tutor. In this sense, their training is a key factor and, therefore, they must know the different areas and aspects of the teaching-learning process; especially in questions related to socio-emotional development, promotion of prosocial behaviors, group management, change of attitudes and conflict resolution, improvement of self-esteem. (p. 6)*

Likewise, Koller, Osterlind, Paris and Weston (2004) stated that educators must be trained to create a positive environment in the classroom, as a space that is grounded in the strengths of their students so that they can learn academic content while they develop a positive self-image. Of particular importance, in this process, is promoting healthy social relationships among students and increasing student self-esteem. In addition, teachers should be vigilant in identifying those students who are or could be at high risk of being school dropouts. Educators must be able to recognize and apply stress management techniques and, in the meantime, know where to find support when they also confront their emotional problems (Koller, et al., 2004). For their part, Wolin and Wolin (1993) specified that in order for the teacher to promote resilience, the teacher must have three characteristics:

- a positive mindset that focuses on the person's strengths rather than weaknesses;

- a vocabulary of resilient behaviors, that is, believing in the student's capacity and

- the ability to help people refocus painful experiences.

3

On his part, López (2010) carried out a qualitative study that used the focus group technique to interview directors of public schools in an educational region, with the purpose of exploring the practices of principals in creating resilient contexts. The findings reflected that, through resilient practices, leaders can deal with the existential problems of their school community. Among these practices they mentioned: cultivating a positive image, providing support to themselves and others; staying balanced in chaotic times, moving purposefully towards your vision as well as adapting and overcoming adversity. Finally, López (2010) recommended that teachers' perception of promoting resilience in the school context be studied.

Resilience-promoting practices
During the experience generated in teaching practice, the teacher-student has the opportunity to apply various practices in order to promote learning in their students. Thus, in the classroom, the teacher can also use various practices to promote educational resilience (Waxman, Gray and Padrón, 2004). In fact, Downey (2008) compiled a list of resilience-promoting practices that the teacher can implement in the classroom. These are, as follows:

1. Teacher-student relationship characterized by trust and affection.
2. Maintain a positive attitude towards the achievement capacity of each student.
3. Emphasize effort and achievement in each student.
4. Provide support for the academic achievement of each student.
5. Develop individual self-esteem through an emphasis on personal achievements and strengths.
6. Help students develop their personal goals.
7. Help students develop a sense of pride in their work.
8. Promote the development of self-control in students.
9. Emphasize the development of courage, confidence and a sense of belonging.
10. Give students purpose and responsibility for what happens in their school and in the classroom.
11. Encourage student participation.
12. Maintain a clear structure for social and academic behavior in the classroom.
13. Establish rules and modify them as necessary.
14. Use cooperative learning teams with established group goals and responsibility among each team member to motivate learning.
15. Implement tutorials among the same students.
16. Implement activities aimed at promoting peer help.

These practices are consistent with the recommendations made by Benard (1991, 1993, 2003, 2004) as well as Henderson and Milstein (2003), who identified three factors that are critical to healthy development and good school achievement: (a) relationships that provide affection and support, (b) set and convey high and realistic expectations and (c) provide opportunities for meaningful participation. In particular, Henderson and Milstein (2003) established a model called *The Wheel of Resilience* that they applied to the educational field. This includes six steps to promote resilience in the school context that constitutes a strategy aimed at promoting educational resilience. In turn, these steps are grouped into two blocks. The first are factors that mitigate the effect of risk and the second are those that make it possible to build resilience. The two factor blocks are as follows:

1. Mitigate the effect of risk: it consists of enriching prosocial ties, setting clear and firm limits and teaching life skills.

2. Build resilience: it is about providing affection and support, setting and conveying high and realistic expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation.

The application of these steps and the establishment of a healthy climate in the classroom are essential for the promotion of educational resilience (Downey, 2008). However, this situation represents a complex challenge for teachers. Therefore, there is a need to study the level of teacher training in the topic of promoting resilience in the school context (Koller and Bertel, 2006).

In this regard, teacher preparation programs correspond to the fundamental component of teacher training (Koller, Osterlind, Paris and Weston, 2004; Yost, 2006). Programs that prepare teachers must train students who are at the forefront of the new paradigms that influence education (UNESCO, 1998). Resilience is part of this new paradigm where the emphasis of education goes beyond teaching content, but also focuses on all aspects of the human, social and emotional development

of the student. Therefore, it is essential that teacher candidates reflect an appropriate understanding of the concept of resilience and that they demonstrate the application of practices that promote educational resilience (Uriarte, 2006).

Methodology

Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework for this study is *The Resilience Wheel* model established by Henderson and Milstein and applied to the educational field. This includes six steps to promote resilience in the school context, which are discussed below.

1. The first step in mitigating risk factors is to enrich prosocial ties (Henderson and Milstein, 2003). This step involves creating opportunities for children to interact with their peers and increasing cooperative activities that generate a classroom climate or a positive and supportive institutional culture. Participation in activities inside and outside the school should be promoted with the purpose of fostering close ties between students and, at the same time, they are less likely to engage in risky behaviors. The activities must take into account the multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2000) and the learning styles of the students. Direct contact with parents is essential to inform them of their children's achievements and involve them in school and extracurricular activities. Likewise, Doll and her colleagues indicated that friendly relationships between children and young people are indicators of their psychological well-being that can also affect their academic achievement; for this reason, it is essential to help students develop interpersonal skills. Similarly, Wentzel and Watkins (2002) pointed out that interpersonal relationships of friendship and camaraderie among students are essential to help them develop learning skills, cooperative problem solving, offer tutoring and even share resources.

2. The second step involves setting clear and firm limits that help to understand and respect the rules of coexistence. Students must understand the limits imposed and konow that the purpose of the standards is to foster collaboration and solidarity. Students must participate in the process of construction and transformation of said standards.

3. The third step is to teach life skills or psychosocial skills such as cognitive and social skills, emotion management, conflict resolution procedures and techniques, development of self-control, cooperation, respect, communication skills and assertiveness, while enhancing self-esteem (Downey, 2008). To achieve this, Henderson and Milstein (2003) recommended the integration of group work techniques, cooperation, interaction, decision making, and the use of counseling services. In this process, they propose to involve peers because they can serve as a model for the development of skills that allow them to successfully face the demands and challenges of everyday life.

4. The fourth step is to provide affection and support, which is the fundamental factor in promoting resilience. This step implies the importance of offering positive reinforcements and feedback through messages of support and assessment focused on the effort and in the recognition of the minimum successes and achievements. Resilient people who pointed to the figure of the teacher as a protective factor, describe them (teachers) as people who have taken them into account, who are available, care about them and have shown affection to them (Higgins, 1994). For his part, Benard (2004) pointed out compassion and empathy as a characteristic of these teachers. Compassion, according to Benard, is love that does not judge and that looks beyond the negative behavior of a student and sees pain and suffering. Empathy is the ability to understand how others feel and understand them (Werner, 1992). In such a case, teachers who build resilience do not personally take the behavior of their students, but understand that no matter how negative the behavior is, they consider the student to be doing their best, given their circumstances. These educators are characterized by being interested, listening and knowing the talents of their students.

5. In addition, the model recommends a fifth step: set and convey high expectations. The high expectations of teachers reflect a deep belief in the resilience that a student can possess and in his ability to learn (Benard, 2004). Teachers can recognize existing strengths and thus reinforce them; that is, they must recognize and promote multiple intelligences (Gardner, 2000).

6. The sixth step of the Resilience Wheel Model is to provide opportunities for meaningful participation. This step involves giving everyone a level of responsibility for what happens at school, as well as giving them the opportunity to participate in decisions, planning and conflict resolution. Educators who build resilience engage their students and enable them to make decisions, including in creating classroom rules (Benard, 2003). They involve students in curriculum planning, give them choices in their educational experiences, and use participatory assessment practices such as portfolios and other assessment techniques. In addition, they allow students to become actively involved in problem solving by asking questions that motivate their self-reflection, critical thinking, awareness, and dialogue

about personal and social issues. They are also given the opportunity to lead committees and peer support programs, such as mentoring (Downey, 2008).

Method

This study is a qualitative study. On the subject, Merriam (2009) explained that the qualitative methodology implies a descriptive and discovery emphasis where the objectives are aimed at interpreting the meaning of the experience. In general, qualitative research is carried out with an exploratory purpose, especially when the subject has not been widely studied in a population. For this reason, the methodology used in this study is qualitative hermeneutic in nature. Hermeneutics is concerned with the description and the interpretation of the essential structures of lived experience, as well as to the recognition of the pedagogical significance and importance of this experience (Gnonlonfoun, 2014; Ayala Carabajo, 2008). In this study, the experience is the teaching practice related to the opportunity of the students to contextualize the knowledge acquired during their preparation and in the application of practices promoting educational resilience.

In this way, questions are raised about the meaning and meaning of the experience. Indeed, this is why the focus group question guide has questions such as: How has your experience been in teaching practice? What educational strategies can you identify that you have successfully applied in your teaching practice? And how do you think those strategies you have used can help promote resilience in your students?

The following instruments were used in this study: an inventory and a focus group question guide. Before starting each focus group, participants completed an inventory of resilience-building practices in the classroom. This inventory was based on the Resilience Wheel Model and the Downey (2008) study. The inventory was a written document that presented 16 examples of educational practices based on the list of practices promoting educational resilience compiled by Downey (2008). Participants had to answer if they had had the opportunity to apply them during their teaching practice.

After completing the inventory, the focus group interview began. The focus group question guide was based on the research questions and included the following preliminary categories: general background, knowledge of the concept of resilience and experience of teaching practice. The general background questions were directed at the beginning of the interview so that the student-teachers were open to dialogue and reflected on their role as a teacher and the reason why they decided to study this profession. Once the conversation was established, more specific questions related to knowledge about the concept of resilience were asked. Participants were asked if they had heard the concept of resilience, that is, if they had previous knowledge of what resilience is; and if they knew it, then their definition of the concept. Once the participants offered a description of their prior knowledge about the concept, the researcher went on to offer the explanation of the concept (the Grotberg definition), and thus verify if the participants could identify characteristics of resilience in themselves and their students. Once the concept of resilience had been discussed, it was time to ask specific questions related to the experiences acquired during the teaching practice and what educational strategies the participants used to verify which practices they applied and, in turn, were identified in the literature as promoters of resilience.

The analysis of the qualitative data should be carried out simultaneously with the data collection (Merriam, 2009). For this reason, this simultaneity allowed the researcher to begin his analysis from the first interview session. Thus, although initial categories were established through the interview guide questions, the inductive process led to the consolidation of categories and the emergence of subcategories as part of the continuous comparison of common patterns through the data.

Once the audio transcripts were completed, comments and responses were organized, according to the questions asked in the focus group sessions. First, the researcher created a .doc document where all the answers from each group session organized under the same question were copied. Then, he read all the comments that the participants made to the same question and classified the most frequent answers among the groups, as well as those that could present a divergent comment to what the other members of the group thought. From there emerged codes (emerging themes) which, through the iterative process of analysis, consolidated into categories and subcategories of analysis. Therefore, although the initial questions constituted a guide for the organization of the data, the categories and subcategories of organization of the information were able to change according to the emerging themes that led to the iterative process of data analysis.

In general, the analysis strategy in this study was based on the theoretical framework, the literature review, the comparison between focus groups (Krueger and Casey, 2008), as well as the explanation of patterns of opinions (Merriam, 2009; Yin, 2009) which allowed the discussion to be organized into categories and subcategories, according to the main idea expressed and in correspondence with the research questions.

Focus Group Interview Techniques

In accordance with the qualitative methodology of this research, the focus group interview was used as the main data collection technique. In this regard, Krueger and Casey (2008) explained that focus groups are a carefully designed discussion to obtain participants' perceptions of a topic of interest. The groups are characterized by being made up of people who have certain characteristics in common that provide qualitative data or information by participating in a discussion focused on one area. The purpose of this qualitative research technique is to learn about the psychological and sociocultural characteristics and processes of groups and obtain information about the knowledge and experiences of individuals gathered in small groups to discuss a given problem, experience, service, or phenomenon (Basch, 1987).

Although there is no specific guideline on the number of focus groups, most studies use at least two groups and others more than four (Stewart, Shamdasani, and Rook 2007). The total of focus groups depends on the topic, the questions and the amount of information. For their part, Krueger and Casey (2008) suggested that the groups should be made up of a minimum of four to a maximum of twelve participants. In this study, a total of four focus groups were organized.

Discussion sessions were planned in advance in order to create an environment of trust (Krueger & Casey, 2008), which led to the expression of sincere perceptions on the topic of resilience and the application of practices that promote resilience in the room of classes. According to Stewart, Shamdasani and Rook (2007) the sessions can last from 90 to 150 minutes. In this research, the sessions of each focus group lasted approximately 60 minutes each. Furthermore, in this study, the moderator was the researcher, who has previous experience as a focus group facilitator.

The use of focus group interviews is supported by the theory that a person's opinions are developed largely through interaction with other people (Krueger & Casey, 2008). The evidence indicates that the opinions of the participants are the result of the exchange of diverse points of view, experiences and attitudes expressed through their comments and expressions (Stewart, Shamdasani & Rook, 2007). This technique allowed the researcher to listen to the reasons and circumstances for which a particular response or comment was offered.

Likewise, it allowed the investigation of the answers offered at the time through follow-up or clarifying questions. The group dynamics could reveal additional aspects or common experiences that emerged as a product of the interaction between the participants.

Participants

Participants were selected from those student-teachers or preservice teachers enrolled in the Vocational and Technical Teacher Training School of Lokossa during the 2018-2019 school year. Bloomberg and Volpe (2008) as well as Creswell (2007, 2009) indicated that the unit of analysis of a qualitative study must be chosen with purpose and for this, selection criteria must be outlined. The criteria used to select the participants were that the students were enrolled in third year in the school and that they were available to participate in the study voluntarily. To this end, a list was requested from the Registrar's office to identify the number of students enrolled in third year in the 2018-2019 school year. None of them were asked for their names. Then, invitations were made to those who wished to participate voluntarily. Participants (N = 40) were divided into four groups. Two of them abandoned later on. Therefore, the total of participants used actually was 38. Regarding sociodemographic data, it was observed that 28 participants were male (74%) and 10 female (26%), for a total of 38 students.

Procedure

The interviews were carried out in a classroom within the same campus and did not affect the teaching time. Participants completed a consent form on the disclosure of the information and were instructed that the interviews would be recorded and transcribed using Voice Notes 3.56 (free) set on a TECNO-W3 android cellphone and that they could leave the study when they wanted to or not answer questions, without penalty. Likewise, the participants were told that once the audio recordings were transcribed, they could read them and certify that their opinion was reflected in the transcripts. They were assured of privacy, and their names were not used in the transcripts, but a code.

The audio recordings were fully transcribed after each focus group session. This process allowed the researcher to review the group dynamics, the data and the effectiveness of the questions used before beginning the analysis of the following group. A unique code was assigned to each participant for the protection of identity and thus to maintain confidentiality.

Discussion of Results

The data obtained show that 89% of students had never taken courses on resilience. On the other hand, seven (37%) mentioned that they did discuss the concept of resilience in one of their courses. None reported having previous experience as a teacher. Therefore, teaching practice was their first complete immersion experience as teachers in a classroom.

The discussion of the results is guided by the categories that were identified with each of the research questions and the themes that emerged through the collection of the data. The analytical categories that guide the discussion of the results are: (a) knowledge about resilience and (b) experiences and application of practices promoting resilience.

Research question 1. What knowledge about resilience do the participants have during their teaching practice?
During the analysis of the audio transcripts of the focus group interviews, various themes emerged that were part of the conversation generated by the intrinsic dynamics of the focus group. These themes were common in all the groups, and the participants' discussion revolved around: (a) knowledge and ignorance about resilience, (b) characteristics of resilient students and (c) multiplicity of teacher roles. As part of the iterative process of data reduction these topics were organized in analytical category and grouped into subcategories such as (a) Knowledge about the concept of resilience and (b) Role of the teacher, and they are presented below.

Knowledge about the concept of resilience
In this study, the limitation in knowledge on the concept of resilience that most of the participants exhibited was observed. 84 percent of the participants could not describe the concept of resilience and its implications in education during the focus group discussion.

63 percent of the participants expressed that they had not heard the concept before. A few (3) of the participants said they had heard it once while studying elsewhere. The student teachers who expressed that they did know the concept, defined it as: "the ability one has to recover from a situation ... if we have a skill, focus on it, put problems aside ..." (Kokou).

Despite the doubts expressed by the participants about the concept of resilience, the interaction between their peers in the focus groups aroused in them a greater interest in learning more about resilience-promoting practices and their application in the classroom. Unlike the beginning of the interview where only 16% of the participants were able to express what they understood about the concept, at the end of each focus group, a greater awareness of resilience could be seen when they were asked again what they understood about the concept and if they could remember students exhibiting resilience characteristics. Then, 95% of the participants were able to provide a general description and identify resilience characteristics, according to the information they could obtain from the discussion in the focus group.

Meanwhile, three participants did not answer this question, while six other participants answered that for them resilience was: "something that one must earn with a lot of effort and sacrifice" (Alicia) and "change, mold" (Dossi) respectively. While a participant described it as: "working with different strategies so that students acquire values and scientific knowledge". These definitions show that, although the conceptual definition of resilience was provided during the focus group, some participants were not clear about its meaning. This ignorance was to be expected especially since the majority (63%) had not heard the term before; that is, they met the term for the first time in the focus group discussion. This situation agrees with the review of the literature on resilience. In particular, the findings of the Green, Oswald, and Spears (2007) study also found a lack of understanding about the concept although, like the participants in this study, they also had a desire to help their students deal with adversity.

Role of the teacher
In the case of the participants in this study, all expressed that they were very clear about the multiplicity of roles that teachers currently have. For example, one of them expressed that he considered his role as a teacher to be:

"Social and affective ... I think that teachers are an important part of the puzzle called society. The work of the teacher should not remain in a specific subject but transcend and reach the student from different perspectives ". This opinion was common in all the groups interviewed; it was born on the part of the same participants. They all agreed that the teacher should create a balance between authority and, at the same time, be a figure that provides affection and support your students. In fact, this constitutes a protective factor for resilience as established by Henderson and Milstein (2003) and Benard (2004). Consistently, the participants expressed being aware of the role of the teacher, as mentioned by one of them: "the role of the teacher is very broad today, because we have to teach our subject and all those values today because society is lacking them "(Awa).

It is worth noting how several participants showed the following characteristics: (a) a positive mindset that focuses on the person's strengths rather than weaknesses; (b) a vocabulary of resilient behaviors, that is, believing in the student's capacity and (c) the ability to help people refocus painful experiences. For example, they indicated cases of students that they recognized as resilient and that adequately illustrate this mentality focused on the student's strengths and ability to achieve:

> *She is a girl who does not give up and she does everything she can in the classroom and she does not give up ... she says 'I want to pass, I want to pass' and she says to me and she sees the effort. And she has no support at home, she does it all by herself and at school the teachers help her (Hounsi).*

For his part, another participant expressed his concern for his students and how he talks to them and advises them to motivate themselves to continue with their studies. The following comment exemplifies a vocabulary that reflects the belief in the student's ability:

> *I have known how to sit in the patio with a student, because I see him with this face of tragedy, and I say to him: what's wrong with you? "It's just that I'm tired of school, that they give me a lot of jobs", I also tell him, if you want, to be someone in life, you have to study yourself, it's not easy ... and each child is a world apart, and everyone has their problems, their needs, differences, I have been able to identify with myself, children who are going through the same thing that one goes through, and how well and interestingly they overcome it, and they handle things better than one (Alain).*

Research question 2. What are the experiences of the participants regarding the application of practices promoting educational resilience during their teaching practice?
Reactions concerning experiences and application of practices promoting resilience were nourished by the emerging themes that were part of the conversation generated in the focus groups and the responses of the participants in the inventory. As part of the iterative process of data reduction, these topics were grouped into subcategories called: 1) resilience-promoting practices and 2) resilience wheel model.

All the interviewees described their teaching practice process and especially expressed the challenges they faced and how they managed them until they finished their work. In this way a participant put it: "For me it was not easy, but neither was it impossible… There were moments in practice when they were difficult for me, but despite everything, I kept my temper and even so, well, I followed "(Dansou).

Resilience-promoting practices
The results of the inventory demonstrate that 89 percent or more participants mentioned that they had applied the following resilience-promoting practices: (a) relationship with the student characterized by trust and affection, (b) maintaining a positive attitude towards each student's ability to achieve, (c) emphasize effort and achievement in each student, (d) help students develop a sense of pride in their work, e) emphasize the development of confidence, (f) encourage student participation, (g) establish rules and modify them as necessary, (h) ensure that students read and understand according to the grade they are taking, (i) give students purpose and responsibility for what happens in their school and in the classroom and (j) use cooperative learning teams with established group goals and set responsibility among each team member to motivate the learning. 80 percent of participant teachers mentioned that they applied these practices; however, the last two applied less frequently: giving students purpose and responsibility (60%) and using cooperative learning teams with established group goals (70%). However, there were several practices in which all the groups presented less knowledge and application. In fact, in all groups, 50 percent or less of the participants mentioned that they could apply the following: (a) teach assertiveness skills, (b) implement peer tutoring, and (c) promote extracurricular activities.

Resilience Wheel Model
The six steps of the model are the basis for the discussion of results. Thus, the extent to which participants were able to apply these six steps is presented.

> *1. Relationships that provide affection and support*

Most of the participants, that is to say 95 percent, expressed that the relationship between teacher and student should be based on affection and that they fostered it during their teaching practice. Empathy, or the ability to understand how others feel and understand them, is a trait exhibited by resilient people and this was a trait that was expressed by several

participants. For example, a participant expressed: "… they are children, sometimes they make mischief and that, I understand them and I try to be understanding with them because I imagine when I was in fifth grade, the things that I did and think that I can't be scolding them so much and I advise you… "(Paul). Congruent, another one of the participants mentioned: "that is why when the students take their situations to me, as I went through and lived that experience, it is easier for me to talk to them and understand them" (Amavi).

2. *Set and convey high and realistic expectations.*

Some participants had the opportunity to delve into the importance of multiple intelligences. In fact, incorporating and nurturing multiple intelligences is an approach that allows the teacher to set realistic expectations and thus help students develop those areas that need more emphasis. This topic only came up in one group. Indeed, one participant mentioned that he had the opportunity to apply the theory to practice, according to him: "I am applying it because we have studied and we are using the intelligence of Howard Gardner" (Dossou). In particular, participants in the same group explained the importance of this theory.

On the other hand, inherent to high expectations, is the idea of not accepting excuses and recognizing that all students can achieve the best results possible as long as the support to achieve is provided. However, one of the participants exposed a particular situation in which a balance was not reflected between the affection towards their students and not accepting excuses. She expressed: "I let them pass many, the works are delivered late, and I let them pass, I do not take points, because sometimes they make me feel sorry" (Assiba). Although this comment reflects empathy towards students, it is not conducive to promoting resilience, because the lack of clear expectations, coupled with the lack of limits, are barriers to building resilience in the classroom, just as Henderson and Milstein (2003) point out.

3. *Provide opportunities for meaningful participation*

The participants were very aware of the importance of carrying out activities that motivated the student, such as incorporating games, stories, songs or other entertaining activities. All answered that they did encourage student participation. Some deepened the participation of the students and expressed that they encouraged it through promoting socialized discussion with guiding questions that allow their students to speak about issues related to values, such as kindness and respect. Likewise, it is worth highlighting the opinion of the following participant who carried out her practice in a first cycle class. She mentioned how she allows the students to discover and how her role is that of facilitator: "I let them discover everything, I just guide them and I let them speak and speak and they teach the class themselves. I am there, I give you the idea and I ask you many questions…"(Cica).

4. *Enrich prosocial ties*

This particular step turned out to be one of the least applied, in the opinion of the participants. In the inventory, half of the interviewees mentioned that they did not remember having applied certain practices aimed at promoting the interpersonal skills of students, such as promoting work and peer tutoring. Likewise, only 26 percent mentioned that they integrated the teaching of assertiveness skills. This is somewhat strange considering that they are expected to apply the competency-based approach which requires them to do so.

5. *Set clear and firm limits*

All the participants mentioned that they had established rules in the classroom. In addition, they made reference to classroom management and behavior modification techniques. For example, one of them expressed what she did when she encountered situations of disrespect. The following comment reflects that she was aware of fostering respect, setting limits, and recognized that all of her students could achieve:

> *In my classroom, if I see them start to say comments out of place, I stop the class and take even 5 minutes to talk to them about how to respect others and why. For them to understand that not all the time you have to feel bad and you don't have to be disrespecting other people. In my group one comes out and says rough to the other ... and I say to them: "No, this is how we got there, you can't be saying things that are not, here everyone has the talent to get ahead, and I don't like that." … That's a lack of respect". We explain, we talk, each one makes his point and there are times when they apologize and other times they come to me and say "excuse me" (Akoivi).*

6. *Teach life skills*

These practices include developing skills such as teaching cognitive and social skills, emotion management, conflict resolution, cooperation, communication skills, and assertiveness, while enhancing self-esteem and self-control. An average of 65% of the participants answered that they did not know or had not applied the skills of assertiveness and communication, conflict resolution, handling emotions, problem solving and critical thinking. One of them said: "Many of these techniques one wants to implement at the moment, but many go unplanned" (Veronique) and another mentioned: "they are spontaneous" (Dine). The reality is that, as the Henderson and Milstein (2003) model points out, in order to promote resilience, it is necessary to plan with respect to this matter and not just leave it to improvisation.

Conclusion

In general, although the participants expressed having the necessary disposition to promote educational resilience, they lacked knowledge about the concept. This ignorance agrees with studies such as Green, Oswald and Spears (2007), who also found that teachers presented myths and doubts about the process of developing resilience.

Participants perceived little or no emphasis on studying the concept of resilience in their classes during the Practicum period. This reflects the need to integrate the promotion of resilience as part of the courses in the teacher training institutions. Also, participants need more preparation on how to teach assertiveness skills, how to implement peer tutoring, and how to develop extracurricular activities. These practices are very important in promoting resilience, especially because they are beneficial to counteract risk factors, such as poverty (Schoon, Parsons and Sacker, 2004). Although the interviewees expressed that they carried out practices related to resilience promotion, they did not carry them out in order to establish a strategy aimed at promoting resilience due to the lack of knowledge they had about this concept.

In general, the development of a resilience-building attitude is essential for teachers. This attitude implies the belief in the ability of achievement and success of each student regardless of the background from which he or she comes. As stated by Henderson and Milstein (2003), the greatest barrier in promoting resilience, by teachers, is the lack of knowledge and skills to apply practices that promote educational resilience. Therefore, the teacher training program was recommended to place particular importance on developing knowledge in its teacher students of what resilience is and how to promote educational resilience.

On the other hand, the use of the focus group technique allowed to foster the interest of the participants in the concept of resilience and to make them aware of their own resilient characteristics. In this way, the technique not only facilitated data collection, but the interaction generated between the participants helped them share experiences and thus they achieved a group discussion that allowed them to learn from each other. In fact, this is part of the intrinsic characteristics of focus group dynamics (Krueger and Casey, 2008).

Future research is recommended to:

- ✓ carry out a comparative study that gathers the opinions and perceptions of in-service teachers, teacher advisors (Conseillers Pédagogiques) and secondary school inspectors to compare how they perceive the performance of their practitioners,
- ✓ investigate the application of resilience-promoting practices in private schools,
- ✓ carry out longitudinal studies that explore the opinions and perceptions about resilience of a group of students at the end of the practice and explore their opinions a year later and
- ✓ carry out quantitative studies that use questionnaires on the application of practices that promote resilience and that allow a representative sample of student teachers to be incorporated into teacher training programs.

Last but not the least, it should be recalled that since no individual or follow-up interviews were conducted with the participants, the results obtained through group discussions are not generalizable and only allow conclusions applicable to the participants of this study.

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