

BEND OR BREAK?

## CONNECTING LEADERS WITH EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper is based on research carried out for a Masters in Education completed in 2012. Taking school leaders as its starting point, it explores what accounts for the ability of some leaders to withstand the pressure of long working hours and constant change in a climate of high accountability, while others find themselves overwhelmed and forced to take time out. The concept of emotional resilience is illuminated through six semi-structured interviews which sought to explore what drives headteachers' reactions to the role. The resulting model provides a map of the forces that can strengthen or undermine emotional resilience and highlights the importance of the context in which leaders operate.

### ORIGINALITY/VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

During the ongoing economic recession in Europe, many leaders feel under pressure to achieve more with less; emotional resilience has never been more important. The current research looks beyond traditional stress management strategies to produce a model which will help leaders in different contexts understand how to connect with and sustain their emotional resilience.

**KEYWORDS:** leaders; resilience; school; headteachers; education

### INTRODUCTION

Education in the UK is a political issue. The current government is calling for '*whole system reform [in order to make England] one of the world's top performers*' (DfE, 2010:4). The secretary of state for education refers to there being '*a fierce urgency to our plans for reform*' (DfE, 2010:4)

Despite the self-evident need for the co-operation of the profession in carrying out the reform, and the government's intention to '*support strong and confident leadership for every school*' (DfE, 2010: 26), many headteachers appear to be feeling unsupported (TES/ASCL 2012). Leadership is acknowledged to be stressful (Boyatzis et al: 2006: 9). Eighty five percent of respondents to the NAHT 2009 survey claimed they had experienced work-related stress. Of those, 12% had taken time off work (ranging from 1 day to 18 weeks) due to stress (French, 2009: 23). The thrust of the Workload Agreement (ATL et al,

2003) was that managing workload and achieving a better work-life balance help to alleviate stress, but this strategy had insufficient impact: headteachers have failed to claim their entitlement to 'dedicated headship time' (French, 2009). With the number of headteachers reducing through retirement (Paterson, 2006) and an apparent reluctance of headteachers to recommend the role to others (TES/ASCL 2012), ways of supporting headteachers to make the job manageable must be sought urgently if schools are to gain the strong confident leadership which the government seeks. (DfE, 2010:4) Ninety-eight percent of headteachers who responded to a survey carried out in three local authority areas in 2011 (Steward, 2011) stated that emotional resilience is 'very important' in headship, but more spent time consciously working to develop that of others than focusing on their own.

It is widely accepted that leadership development is synonymous with the development of the leader as a human being (Bennis, 1997; Senge 2004; Harris, 2007; West-Burnham, 2009). Much of the current literature regarding school leadership evaluates the person in the role, without looking at the foundations of a leader's response to the role. This study aims to redress the balance by looking at leaders' beliefs about, and expectations of, themselves.

As a leadership development consultant and coach who has worked with school leaders for more than 15 years, I know that even the most experienced and effective can question their own competence and feel weighed down by the job. The purpose of my research was to explore what it is that allows some headteachers to be able to withstand the pressure of long working hours and constant change in a climate of high accountability, while others find themselves overwhelmed and forced to take time out. What, in short, are the different characteristics of the 85% who reported work-related stress in the NAHT survey (French, 2009: 23), the 15% who did not, and the 12% who took time off for stress? I emphasise **emotional** resilience because our emotional reactions precede our rational reactions: if they are denied they may contaminate our rational reactions so we become overwhelmed by emotion. (Harris, 2007: 51). For the purpose of this paper I define emotional resilience as '*the ability to remain on course without being adversely affected by emotional responses*'.

Earlier research pointed to the significance of what was called 'the internal story' (Steward 2011: 21-23). My experience of coaching tells me that how we respond to situations determines whether or not they are stressful, hence I sought to uncover leaders' conscious and unconscious responses to life's events and the influences on them which contribute to emotional resilience or its absence. I wanted to know what beliefs headteachers hold about themselves and their role which affect their response. Where do these come from? Can emotional resilience be taught, learned or developed, or is it a part of character which is formed early and fixed?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The research question, '*Is it possible proactively to develop emotional resilience for leadership, and if so, how?*' touches on themes of emotional resilience; well-being, work-life balance and stress; self-confidence, self-awareness, self-management and self-acceptance; and values.

The term 'resilience' or 'emotional resilience' is frequently identified as fundamental to successful school leadership (Steward, 2011:9-13) often without being clearly defined. Its identification as one of the development needs in preparation for the role of an executive headteacher (NCSL, 2010) implies that its development would be beneficial early in a headteacher's career, rather than relegating it to the status of 'just in time' professional development. Discussions of resilience include references to persisting in the face of difficulty; maintaining hope against the odds; being optimistic; being courageous; having inner resourcefulness; showing the capacity to recover quickly from setbacks; having moral purpose. Patterson (2005) refers to the term resilience as being '*a convenient label to describe things that bounce back*' (Patterson, 2005: 1) and defines it as '*using your energy productively to emerge from adversity stronger than ever*' (Patterson 2005: 3). Barrett (2010: 399) describes resilience as '*the ability of an entity to withstand and bounce back from shocks that test its ability for continuous profitable functioning*' adding that '*it is essential to invest in resilience*'.

### **Work-life balance, well-being and stress**

The Workforce Agreement made between public sector unions and the government in 2003 aimed to ensure the well-being of the workforce through better work-life balance. 'Dedicated headship time' was seen as a necessity for headteachers. Despite many headteachers acknowledging that balance between the personal and professional lives contributes to wellbeing, over half of those who took part in the NAHT survey 5 years later did not take the dedicated headship time to which they were entitled (French, 2009: 11). Other contributors to well-being linked to time include: time for reflection; networking with other headteachers; and pursuing other opportunities. (Pass 2009: 14). Well-being is seen as being not only about avoiding long hours: '*having a positive attitude and emotional resilience*'; '*knowing you are doing a good job without jeopardising health and happiness*'; '*being able to identify the positives so that you can celebrate success*' are all seen as important. Some see well-being as linked to settling for what is '*good enough*' and job satisfaction. (Bristow, 2007, Pass, 2009). There is some that some headteachers acknowledge the importance of health and well-being in making their role sustainable. Equally, over half of those questioned did not identify any action they take to sustain themselves in this respect (Steward, 2011). Knowledge of the importance of well-being does not necessarily lead to action.

School leadership is stressful. Over 3000 school leaders took part in the National Association for Headteachers' (NAHT) work-life balance survey, 2008-09. Eighty-five percent of respondents said they experienced work-related stress and 64% believed that they had suffered illness as a result of work-related stress (French, 2009: 22). The national Health and Safety Executive's management standards (HSE, 2011 [online]) highlight the importance of undertaking a risk assessment which includes stress at work, and refers to promoting well-being as of equal value to avoiding stress. Casserley (2009) suggests that when stress is prolonged and experienced without the sufferer having confidence in their ability to deal with it, burnout happens. It is not the situation that causes burnout, but the way it is interpreted: those who suffered were unable to stand back and experienced '*dysfunctional closeness*' (Casserley, 2009:77 quoting Clarkson, 1989) with their organisation. They

constantly felt their reputation was on the line. Casserley's subjects are middle managers in a commercial environment, but it is easy to see the potential parallels when a headteacher's reputation is vulnerable to the public judgements made by UK government's office for standards in education (Ofsted).

### **Self-confidence, self-awareness, self-management and self-acceptance**

The first three of these aspects feature in Goleman's emotional competence framework (1998: 26). Harris (2007) acknowledges these as important in school leadership and argues that we need to go beyond learning emotionally intelligent ways to behave which may serve only to mask our shadow side (Jung and von Franz, 1964): that part of ourselves that we wish to hide, not just from others, but also from ourselves. Failure to bring it to consciousness and acceptance will allow it to leak out and contaminate relationships. Since we all have a shadow side, leaders are equally vulnerable to projections from the shadow side of others. Self-acceptance and self-awareness are connected to self-confidence without which, argues Goleman, we can be subject to '*crippling self-doubt*' (p69). It is not sufficient to be competent, one must also believe in one's competence (Clarkson, 1994; Patterson, 2005; Kets de Vries, 2006).

### **Values**

Goleman (1998) argues that choices made in line with values are energising. Twenty-one percent of interviewees in the Bristow (2007) study felt that making a difference to pupils' lives helped to drive and sustain them. The effect of being true to one's values is seen by Patterson (2005) as being an essential component of resilience. Barrett's values consciousness model (1998) highlights the importance of self-awareness if we are to work in line with our values (thus making our work more energising). If we do not pay attention to our physical and emotional needs at the lower levels of the model, the needs of the survival self, we may unconsciously act out of fear. When the needs of the survival self are satisfied, our attention can shift to the higher levels of consciousness, which focus on making a difference to others and service to humanity and the planet; these address the needs of the soul self. (Figure 1)

Human Needs                      Personal Motivation                      Seven Levels of Human Consciousness

Spiritual: <b>soul self</b>	Service	Service	7	Common good
	Make a Difference	Make a Difference	6	
	Meaning	Meaning	5	
	Personal Growth	Transformation	4	
	Achievement			
Emotional/ Physical: <b>survival self</b>	Self-esteem	Self-esteem	3	Self- interest
	Relationships	Relationship	2	
	Health/Safety	Security	1	

Figure 1: Relationship of Human Needs and Personal Motivation to the Seven Levels of Human Consciousness (Barrett 1998, 61 adapted and used with permission)

The unique contribution of Barrett’s model is to legitimise focus on the self, so often ignored by school leaders, in favour of focus on the community. (Pass, 2009: 9).

*‘The true test of how far you have progressed on your leadership journey is how you handle adversity. When adversity strikes, do you descend into fear and react with I-based behaviours or pause, consider what’s best for the common good, and respond with understanding and compassion?’ (Barrett, 2010:138)*

METHODOLOGY

Emotional resilience can be judged only subjectively, (Casserley, 2009, Patterson, 2005) thus an interpretive approach was appropriate. I carried out semi-structured hour-long interviews with each of six headteachers (4 from schools for pupils up to the age of 11; and 2 from schools for pupils aged 11-16/11-18). Two interviewees were selected to coincide with each of three length-of-service categories: early years of headship (first 3 years) more experienced (3-10 years) and most experienced (10+ years). Actual experience ranged from 5 months to 27 years. An earlier research project using the same categories (Steward, 2011) had elicited responses from forty-nine headteachers in three local authority regions, and helped to define areas of questioning for interviewees. I had a pre-existing relationship with each interviewee before I contacted them about the research project. In some cases this was limited to a brief meeting; in others a more lengthy relationship as colleague pre-existed. I undertook not only to maintain confidentiality, but also to avoid alluding to any information gained from the interviews in any subsequent conversation with the interviewee. This helped to accelerate rapport (McConnell-Henry et al. 2010). Questionnaire and interview results allowed comparisons to be made between responses from more and less experienced headteachers.

In order to establish consent from an informed position, areas of questioning were communicated in advance and interviewees invited to terminate the interview and withdraw permission at any stage. Semi-structured interviews afforded the opportunity to probe beyond surface issues to explore further the experiences, interpretation and beliefs which accounted for feelings, thoughts and behaviour. A small audio recorder was used and a full transcript made of each interview. Transcripts were shared with interviewees as an additional ethical safeguard. Transcripts facilitated in-depth review of the use of language which had potential to provide insight into unconscious thoughts and feelings. I made the decision to ask each interviewee for their own interpretation of the term 'emotional resilience' in order to ensure that their interpretation of my questions reflected their, rather than my, subjective interpretation.

## RESULTS

For ease of reference, each headteacher is defined by a number. The characteristics associated with each headteacher are set out below.

Headteacher	Time in headship	Gender	Phase (age of pupils)
1	up to 3 years	Female	First School (5-8)
2	up to 3 years	Male	Secondary (11-16)
3	3-10 years	Female	Infant (4-7)
4	3-10 years	Female	Primary (5-11)
5	10+ years	Female	Primary (5-11)
6	10+ years	Male	Secondary (11-18)

All definitions included reference to emotional resilience involving some sort of control over individuals' own reactions. The language used in the definition reveals differences in interviewees' standpoint. HTs 1,3, 5 and 6 all think of emotional resilience as something which allows them to maintain a course without malfunction. HT2's response suggests an element of defensiveness (*'how tough you are – how hard'*) while the language of HT4 suggests a sense of being under attack

*'... that ability to withstand the slings and arrows of misfortune – what armoury you have. Some people have really good armour and some people have good defensive systems, but it's really what works for you'* (HT4)

This headteacher's rating of her resilience on a ten point scale is lower than that of other headteachers. In scoring her resilience, she referred to her recent absence from work through stress.

### Positive contribution to emotional resilience

Several interviewees referred to taking action to ensure a healthy lifestyle as a feature of what supports their own emotional resilience. HT2 was aware of the impact of tiredness on his own capability. His term-time schedule seemed unsustainable and though he had had a health scare, the pace continued, albeit coupled with a resolution to go away with his family every other weekend. HT3 had not always executed her plan for regular exercise and HT5's interview suggests that the need to pay attention to well-being may be something that simply slips out of consciousness.

*'I've recently done a little inventory about that. It didn't tell me anything I didn't know: that I drink too much that I don't eat properly and I should do more exercise ...'* (HT5)

Headteachers also identified the following as having a positive impact on their emotional resilience: *'regular feedback'*; *'feeling valued as an individual'*; *'a sense of achievement through making a difference'*; *'time for reflection'*; *'a love of the job'*; and support of colleagues and family.

There was a connection between being able to take control and feeling resilient. The degree to which interviewees could acknowledge and live with a lack of control varied:

*'I actually think - and I have learned – your mind can take you to places you don't want to go, and you don't have a lot of control over it. And that's when your emotional resilience just goes'* (HT6)

*'I think ...is it in my control at all? And if it's not, then I just am much better at letting go'* (HT5)

While all agreed that the job becomes more manageable with experience, emotional challenges of the role which remain to a greater or lesser extent, regardless of time served were:

- Dealing with personnel, safety or child protection issues
- The isolation of the role (all interviewees)
- The need to be positive/resilient for others
- Being a target for the projection of others' anger or anxiety
- Public accountability (though the impact of this on individuals varied)
- Workload

### **Expectations of the person in the role**

Those who had been in headship longest were able to identify a change in attitude. After 27 years one headteacher HT was able to look back to his early days of headship and acknowledge that he tried to be all things to all people but then realised that *'sensible people do not expect perfection. They want an honesty and a willingness to say when you get it wrong'* (HT6). After 5 months in headship, HT2 was conscious of the pressure of outside agencies making judgements about his leadership *'I think I've got a terrible fear that I'm going to get found out at some stage'*, but had no difficulty sharing his mistakes with his

staff, seeing it as a sign of professional humility. His credibility with staff, and thus his confidence, had grown in the short time he had been in the role, yet when things went wrong, he still asked himself the question *'is the problem actually me?'*

Responses to the public accountability aspect of the role differed. HT3 felt herself to be more accountable to the parents, children and herself, than to Ofsted; HT5, while acknowledging the significance of accountability, didn't really think about it. HT4 felt it as a huge pressure *'everybody knows'*.

The expectation that they could be relied upon was present in all interviews. HTs 3 and 5 highlighted *'letting others down'* as an area where they fall short of their own expectations of themselves, yet self-acceptance was evident in the transcript of HT3's interview.

*'there's that internal dialogue about 'you've given yourself three years but if after two it's too much, you move on' (HT3)*

HT4 felt the weight of parents putting their trust in the school. HT6, faced with the most emotionally draining moments in headship, kept going because people trusted him to be there. In a previous role, HT2 had felt unable to walk away from a very challenging context in a seconded role *'I was head number six in five years' - acknowledging 'there was an element of pigheadedness'*.

HTs 1 and 3 alone amongst the interviewees overtly acknowledged a responsibility for keeping themselves emotionally and physically healthy for the sake of the school

*'... if I arrived; I was full of vision and excitement and everyone thinks 'great' then I go off sick. That's the worst worst thing . . . however bad it gets, the worst thing that could happen is that you let it get on top of you' (HT3)*

Headteachers acknowledged that the role brings with it certain expectations. How they chose to interpret those expectations differed. HT2 felt that he was a completely different (and less likeable) person at school. HTs 1 and 5 were conscious of the public face of headship, with HT5 describing herself as *'more grownup'* in school. Others perceived little difference in themselves within or outside the role.

Personal authenticity, being the same in role and not in role, was a cited by one headteacher as being particularly significant when dealing with the most emotionally draining aspects of the role: dealing with the human issues of death and bereavement *'that's where being yourself is important' (HT6)*

## **Relationship with self**

In an attempt to understand something of what had formed the self-image of these headteachers and their ability to feel comfortable, or not, with the people they are, I asked about their early experiences. HT6 attributed this strong sense of self to his upbringing *'In*



*our family you never pretended to be what you weren't. We never denied who we were'. .*  
HT1 and HT3 spoke of supportive loving families.

HT4's story revealed expectations in childhood of high standards of academic achievement, epitomised by moving from one country's education system to another in order find appropriate academic rigour. She is aware that she now focuses more on her failures than on her successes.

## DISCUSSION

Without doubt, headship demands resilience: all those interviewed agreed; the literature underlines it; the stressful nature of the headship role is well documented. What I was anxious to explore through interviews was the degree to which the personality, experience and outlook of each headteacher has an impact on his or her resilience.

The disciplines of coaching and psychotherapy acknowledge that the words our unconscious offers us can provide insight into our innermost thoughts and feelings. The choice of language used in definitions offered by the interviewees reveals different standpoints. HTs 1,3, 5 and 6 all seem to think of resilience as something which allows them to maintain a course without malfunction – bending rather than breaking. HT2's response suggests a less flexible approach and an element of defensiveness (*'how tough you are – how hard'*) while the language of HT4 suggests she feels herself vulnerable to attack, a feeling almost certainly connected to her recent absence through stress.

*'... that ability to withstand the slings and arrows of misfortune – what armoury you have. Some people have really good armour and some people have good defensive systems, but it's really what works for you'* (HT4).

### **Well-being**

Literature and interview responses make the connection between well-being and managing stress. Early in her first headship, however, HT1 acknowledged the danger of unhelpful habits driven by a need to fulfil expectations of others *'when you want to make an impression, it's easy to drop into a real "work work work work" scenario'*. HT2 acknowledged the punishing nature of his lifestyle, working eighteen-hour days, snatching breaks and sleeping 4 or 5 hours a night. Alongside Casserley's six coping dimensions apparent in the behaviour of those who did not burn out (2009:112), he would score low on sharing, working smarter, hope and renewing; in resolving to take spend every other weekend away, his score on the other two dimensions were on the rise: he had begun to take some proactive steps and set boundaries, possibly prompted by hospitalisation with a suspected heart attack.

There was a tendency for the importance of looking after self to slip out of headteachers' consciousness, even though they knew its importance. Headteachers who are proactive in taking measures to ensure well-being demonstrate two of the strengths of resilient leaders as defined by Patterson (2005): they maintain a sense of personal efficacy and invest personal energy wisely. What is it, then, that prevents all headteachers from behaving in

this way? If they know the theory of keeping themselves at their best: why not simply take those measures? Do they have an unconscious desire to self-destruct? Do they think themselves invincible?

Answers to these questions are complex and varied. Human beings are frequently capable of defeating our best long term interests by serving our immediate needs even though we know that that may lead to difficulties in the future (Dryden, 1990). I stay late at a party, for example, even though I know it will make it harder to get up on time the next morning, because I am enjoying the moment. Headteachers, charged with supporting staff to improve the life chances of pupils, may frequently see looking after themselves as a distraction from the 'moral purpose' to which they are committed.

### **Response to the role: the internal story**

Headteachers provide a public service. Through Ofsted they are publicly accountable for the results their school achieves. When a school's leadership is judged by Ofsted to be inadequate the headteacher's reputation is vulnerable. HTs 1, 3, 5 and 6 saw themselves as being accountable first to the school community. Their response to the role indicates that as long as they can live with themselves, they can live with Ofsted and public accountability.

HTs 2 and 4 had a different response. The former worried about '*being found out*'. Though he knew his resilience had improved and was confident in it, ignoring his own ill-health and continuing a punishing schedule suggest that he was unable or unwilling acknowledge his vulnerability. HT4, in her more fragile state, felt Ofsted as an additional pressure: whatever the judgement '*everybody knows*'.

Most headteachers are more or less driven by 'moral purpose'; this was evident in responses of interviewees. The desire and/or the need to make a difference to the lives of others is part of their value system. How they respond to the role and where they focus their attention makes some headteachers more prey to stress and less resilient than others.

Barrett's Seven Levels of Consciousness model (Figure 1) provides one explanation. Headteachers seek to fulfil the needs of the 'soul self' to serve others through making a difference to others. Their focus is on levels 5, 6 and 7 of the model and as long as levels 1-4 are taken care of, all is well. However, when the needs of the survival self (attention to health, relationships and self-esteem) are forgotten, the greatest unconscious drive is the need for survival. Behaviour is then driven by fear. As long as we continue to ignore the first three levels, our ambition to serve the needs of others is likely to falter.

How we interpret messages from others is influenced by the judgements that we make about ourselves, which in turn are influenced by our upbringing and the beliefs we hold about ourselves. The person-centred approach to psychotherapy tells us that children grow up with 'conditions of worth'. When they behave in ways which are deemed by significant adults as acceptable, they feel accepted; when they do not, they feel rejected. By adulthood we have learned to hide (even from ourselves) anything deemed unacceptable. For example if failure was unacceptable as we were growing up, we will find it difficult to accept the possibility that we have failed as adults, because failure means rejection.

Headteachers frequently identify closely with the schools they lead; it becomes easy to take personally messages from government and the media concerning the inadequacy of the education system, if they also unconsciously perceive themselves as 'not good enough'. Headteachers who perceive themselves as having less worth will find it hard to prioritise their own needs as worthy of attention. It is the self behind the defences – the unconscious self - that leaders need to understand and accept if they are to achieve the '*deep self-knowledge*' to which Harris (2007) refers.

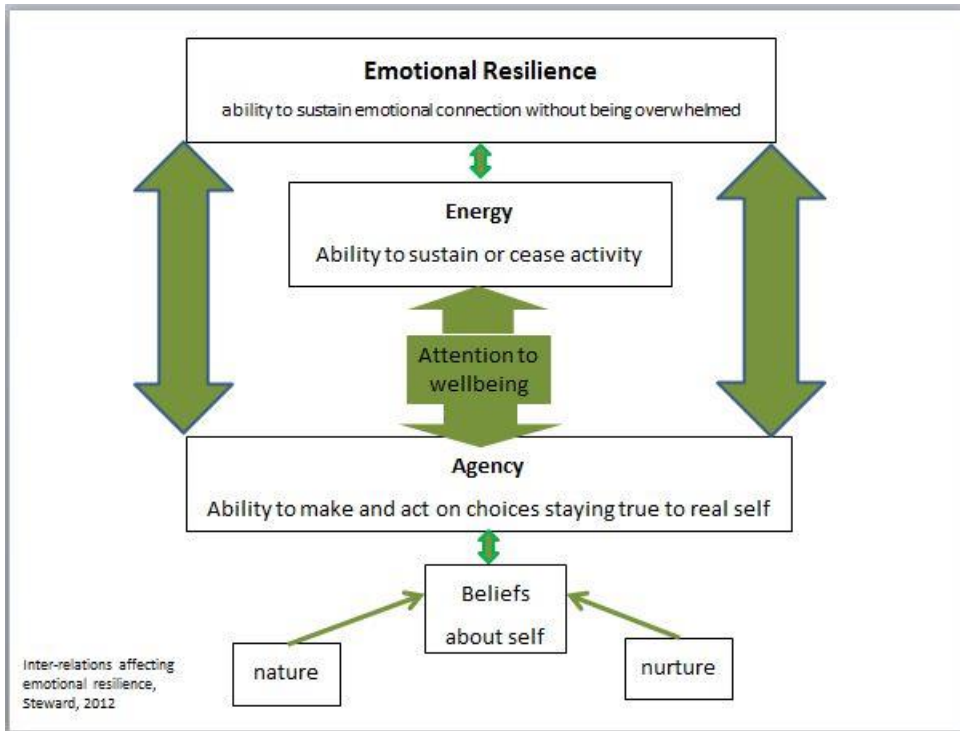
The six headteachers in this study have displayed different degrees of discomfort at being out of control, at not being able to influence others as they would wish, and at having to give bad news to others. They have shown different levels of awareness of their own needs and those of others. Every day they will come into contact with other individuals with different levels of self-awareness, self-acceptance and self-confidence. The more able they are to sustain their own emotional resilience, the more they will be able to give to others. The more aware they are of their own needs as distinct from the projected needs of others, the more they will be able to separate themselves from those projections and carry only their own anxieties. The lighter the load they carry, the more energy they have to focus on the role.

#### IMPLICATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In analysing the results of this study, I am left with a question concerning why some headteachers continue to ignore their own needs and prioritise the needs of others, even to the detriment of their own health. The following figure provides a map of the inter-relationships which affect emotional resilience which, at its simplest, could be described as the ability to sustain emotional connection without being overwhelmed.

Figure 2: Inter-relations affecting emotional resilience, Steward, 2012

[Insert model]



The literature and interview responses underline the importance of well-being in supporting headteachers to remain on top of the demands of their role. Attention to well-being requires self-discipline, fuelled by energy, which I define as the ability to sustain or cease activity: it is equally important (and challenging) to cease unhelpful habits as it is to sustain helpful ones. The greater our sense of well-being, the more energy we have, thus energy and well-being are mutually supportive.

How effectively we use our energy in the service of our own well-being depends on our sense of agency: how able we are to make choices which align with who we really are – not pretending to be someone else, or acting against our better judgement on the grounds that others expect something of us. The headteacher who felt he needed to be someone completely different (and alien) at school, was using energy to keep up the pretence, to the extent that, arguably, it affected his well-being and his health suffered. If we have a weak sense of agency, we are less likely to make decisions which support our wellbeing: the less well we feel, the less able we are to take control. Energy is required to maintain a sense of agency, and the greater our sense of agency, the more able we are to make decisions in our own best interests. The greater our sense of agency, the more we are able to feel in control; the greater our sense of being in control, the greater our emotional resilience. There is thus a symbiotic relationship between well-being, energy, agency and emotional resilience.

Our sense of agency is also affected by our own sense of self – do I believe I have the right to put myself first? Do I value myself? Do I see a connection between my responsibility for the organisation and my responsibility to myself? Do I see myself as superhuman and able to carry on carrying on?

Our beliefs about self are influenced by nature – the sort of people we are – and nurture – our cradle to grave experience. Headteachers both affect and are affected by the systems in which they work, from the global system, with its economic challenges, through the education system of the country (which is the ideal receptacle for the anxieties and insecurities of government and society concerning future generations) to their local community. The role of headteacher may be the only figure of authority which is common to all lives: it becomes an ideal container for the projections of others concerning their unmet needs.

Many school leaders find it difficult to prioritise their needs over the needs of others (notably those of pupils and staff); it has almost become part of the culture of educational leadership. Further study, for example comparing leaders in the commercial and the public sector, or comparing different areas of the public sector, would help to identify to what extent this culture is unique to education, what drives it, and whether it prevails within the caring professions.

It is evident from this study that leaders are more vulnerable to ignoring their own needs at specific times, such as when new in post. School governors, as employers, should support headteachers in undertaking a risk analysis and assure attention to their well-being.

The emotional resilience model identifies the complex web of internal and external features which sustain or undermine resilience, thus providing a map which can be used by leaders and those supporting them to explore the territory, starting at whatever point resonates for the individual. The understanding I have gained through constructing the model allows me to be alert to these interactions when pressure of work emerges in a coaching context. Clients with whom I have shared the model have immediately grasped the significance of their own behaviour and ways of thinking and its impact on their ability to look after themselves. The model is based on a small-scale study in a specific context. It should now be trialled more widely in a number of different contexts to determine to what extent it is relevant in other leadership roles.

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#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Julia Steward is a leadership development consultant and coach with extensive experience of working with school leaders at all levels. In her coaching practice she specialises in working with those whose leadership role makes them highly visible in their local community (including headteachers and clergy) and in supporting clients to understand themselves in order to interact more effectively with others.

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