

# DEVELOPMENT OF THE TEACHER RESILIENCE TOOLKIT

The Teacher Resilience Toolkit was developed by, for, and with students from the school-university partnership at the Marnix Academy in Utrecht (Netherlands) on the basis of the research cycle developed by van der Donk and van Lanen (2020). The main question in this practice-based design research was: What tools can support the resilience of (prospective) teachers within school-university partnerships? The image below shows that the research consisted of two cycles:

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## FEBRUARY 2022 - SEPTEMBER 2022

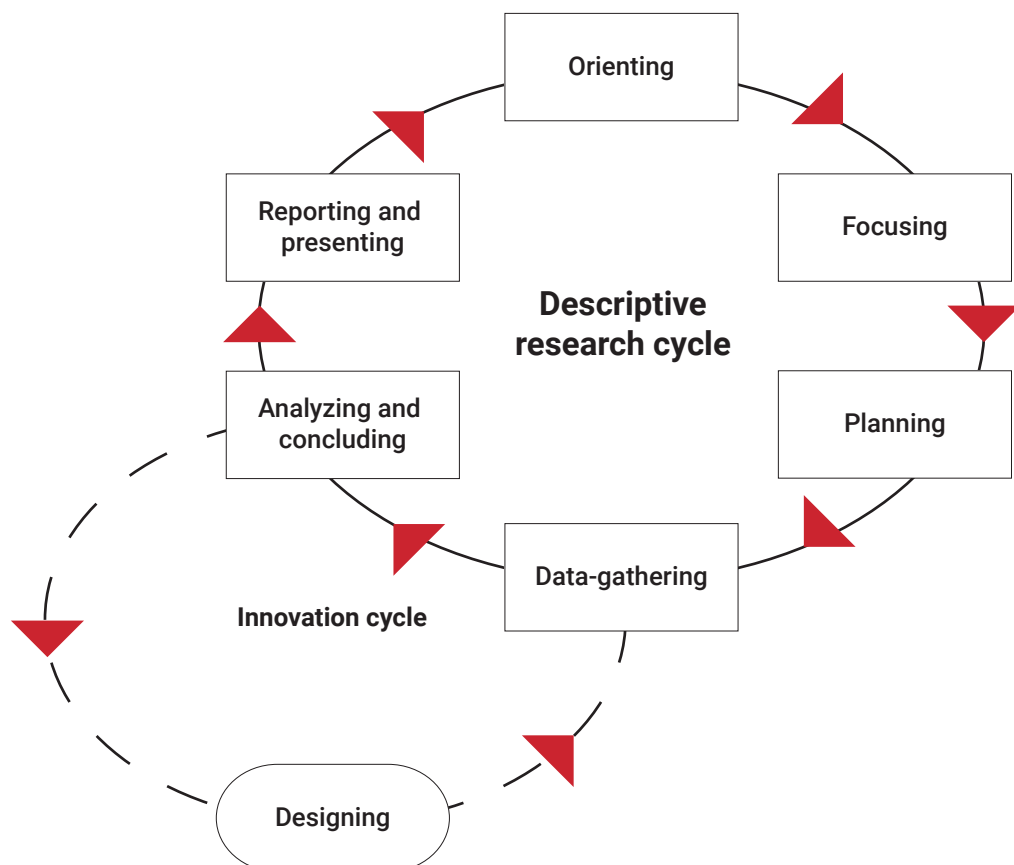
Inventory of needs/wishes for situations within school-university partnerships that require resilience based on questioning student teachers and colleagues from both the Marnix Academy and the field. The (group) interviews also explored which methods for strengthening teachers' resilience are already used in the partnership and could offer starting points for the development of tools. From the field, the request quickly arose to also develop tools for novice teachers.

A parallel trajectory was set up for this using the same research cycle.

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## SEPTEMBER 2022 - DECEMBER 2023

Based on the inventoried needs/wishes for both trajectories, challenges in relation to situations that require resilience were chosen. Possible leads for developing and designing tools for these challenges were explored. In this process, stakeholders (prospective and novice teachers, as well as representatives from teacher education and the field) were regularly questioned in various feedback rounds. The two cycles of this research concerning practice are briefly explained after the image.



## 1) DESCRIPTIVE RESEARCH CYCLE: INVENTORY OF NEEDS/WISHES AND LEADS FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF TOOLS

### ORIENTING

The research was funded by the government in response to the coronavirus crisis and focused on “student teacher well-being.” To narrow this focus, internal documents of the Marnix Academy were studied, and conversations were held with key figures from the organization in relation to this theme. At the same time, the literature was searched for available knowledge regarding (student) well-being in general and (student) resilience in particular. In this context, various available (training) programs and approaches from other universities of applied sciences were also explored.

### FOCUSING

The broad theme of student teacher well-being was narrowed to resilience in order to focus on student teachers’ self-efficacy. We define resilience as the ability to successfully deal with difficult situations, which manifests itself as characteristics such as endurance, determination, self-awareness, and self-confidence. The decision was made to develop tools that can strengthen the resilience of student teachers; methods that they can apply independently, after instruction and guided practice, in situations that require resilience.

### PLANNING

In the first cycle of the research, we aimed to determine the needs/wishes of student teachers regarding situations that require resilience within our school-university partnership. We also investigated what methods that can support the resilience of student teachers are already in use within this partnership. In addition to student teachers, teacher educators from both the Marnix Academy and the field were questioned. Due to high workloads, it was a challenge to find ways to question each target group. In the end, the student teachers were questioned through interviews, research workshops, and a questionnaire, and interviews were used for the teacher educators. The questioning always started with an open-ended question about situations within school-university partnerships in which student teachers need resilience. In a subsequent phase, this was explored further based on the interrelated dimensions of teacher resilience: profession-related, emotional, motivational, and social resilience (Mansfield et al., 2016; see also the theoretical framework at the beginning of the toolkit).

### COLLECTING

Ultimately, nineteen student teachers, eight institute-based teacher educators, and five school-based teacher educators participated in the research. In this phase, the additional project for developing tools for novice teachers also started. Because many teachers drop out in the first five years of their careers, this research focused mainly on student teachers in their graduation year and novice teachers. Additionally, school and institute-based teacher educators as well as mentors were also questioned in research workshops and interviews.

### ANALYZING AND CONCLUDING

The collected data were first categorized into the four dimensions of resilience, with a distinction made between the stakeholder groups: teacher students, colleagues from the Marnix Academy, and colleagues from the field. The data were then thematized per stakeholder group, and it was noted how often a particular theme was mentioned by the respondents. This created an overview per resilience dimension of both the challenges student students experience within school-university partnerships and the leads for the development of the tools already being used within the partnership. The themes for each target group were ranked from most to least often mentioned. Colors were used to indicate which themes matched between the target groups. Below is an example of the challenges mentioned in relation to the profession-related dimension of resilience.

## CHALLENGES PROFESSION-RELATED RESILIENCE

TEACHER STUDENTS	COLLEAGUES MARNIX ACADEMY	COLLEAGUES FROM THE FIELD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dealing with unexpected events, including difficult questions from pupils/colleagues (7)</li> <li>- Dealing with problem behavior (3)</li> <li>- Substituting in another group (1)</li> <li>- Questions from parents (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New challenges in graduation internship, such as dealing with parents (1)</li> <li>- Taking over the class in the absence of the mentor (1)</li> <li>- Experiencing friction between personal vision on education and requirements of practice (1)</li> <li>- Transition from studies to work (1)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being put in front of the class when the student teacher is not ready for it (2)</li> <li>- Not being able to control the class (1)</li> <li>- Dealing with feedback (1)</li> <li>- Difficulties with planning (1)</li> <li>- Responding flexibly to situations that go differently than planned (1)</li> <li>- Reflecting too much from 'I' instead of the class's learning process (1)</li> <li>- Being insufficiently critical, tending towards external attribution (1)</li> </ul>

## 2) INNOVATION CYCLE: DEVELOPING AND DESIGNING TOOLS

### ORIENTING

The results of the descriptive research cycle were used as the basis for the innovation cycle. First, challenges in terms of resiliently responding to situations within school-university partnerships that the student teachers in the research group found more relevant were selected from the overviews per dimension of resilience. The student teachers were explicitly asked to think about the needs of fellow student teachers and especially 'non-model student teachers', as interventions are often developed for what are known as "model students." In the end, challenges were determined per dimension of resilience, for example:

#### PROFESSION-RELATED RESILIENCE:

dealing with problem behavior, dealing with unexpected events, dealing with parents;

#### EMOTIONAL RESILIENCE:

being affected by situations in the classroom, dealing with/letting go of negative thoughts and doubts, having to do everything right/making no mistakes;

#### MOTIVATIONAL RESILIENCE:

motivating yourself (e.g., in case of disappointing results), dealing with stress/work pressure, dealing with uncertainty (prioritizing/focusing);

#### SOCIAL RESILIENCE:

the connection with another person is missing, setting boundaries, having difficult conversations, dealing with feedback.

### FOCUSING

Thereafter, leads for tools introduced in the first phase of the research that could be useful in relation to the chosen challenges were explored. Furthermore, the literature was studied, and the internet was searched. An overview of leads for the tools per challenge was created. Some leads were relevant for multiple challenges, but for some challenges, further leads for tools had to be sought. The decision was made to involve an expert in student resilience in the research. In work sessions, Linda Toonen shared her perspective on student resilience and introduced practices such as mindfulness.

### PLANNING

From the overview of leads, the in the project participating student teachers chose challenges that they would like to develop tools for. A fixed format was provided: on the left, steps for the user, on the right, "tips & tricks" for supporting the user's process, and additional materials on a website. Gender-neutral language was used as much as possible to appeal to a wide range of users. Initial drafts of the tools were then designed and discussed in the research group. The expert also provided feedback on some tools and developed two tools herself. The tools were then further developed into prototypes and presented to future users.

### COLLECTING

Student teachers as well as both school- and institute-based teacher educators from the school-university partnership at the Marnix Academy were questioned in research workshops. After trying out the various tools, "tips and tricks" were shared. In total, seven research workshops were held in the first trajectory and four in the extra trajectory.

### ANALYZING AND CONCLUDING

The collected feedback mainly led to (interim) adjustments of the tools. For instance, the language used did not match the intended audience, some steps of the tools were unclear, and in some cases certain information was missing. In some research workshops, suggestions for new tools also emerged. These suggestions were discussed in the research group, after which additional tools were developed (e.g., the extra tool, "How to get all this done?").

### REPORTING AND PRESENTING

Ultimately, the Teacher Resilience Toolkit was designed by Heldhavig, while the student teachers from the research group were involved at various stages. Both a hard-copy and a digital version of the toolkit are available. The physical version of the toolkit is being used in the school-university partnership at the Marnix Academy. All student teachers and teacher educators in the partnership have received a toolkit. In this way, we aim to build a resilient learning environment for student teachers, (novice) teachers, and teacher educators working together.

#### Sources:

- Mansfield, C., Beltman, F., Broadley, T., & Weatherby-Fell, N. (2016). Building resilience in teacher education: An evidence-informed framework. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 54, 77-87.
- van der Donk, C., & van Lanen, B. (2020). *Praktijkonderzoek in de school* [Practice-based research in schools] (4th ed.). Coutinho.