

BASL CONFERENCE 2014

- COLLEAGUES, GOOD MORNING AND WHAT A PLEASURE TO BE BACK HERE, BOTH AT THE BASL CONFERENCE AND IN BRIGHTON
- AS EVER, I AM LOOKING FORWARD TO A STIMULATING AND INFORMATIVE TWO DAYS WITH OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTIONS FROM OUR GUEST SPEAKERS AND THE OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION AND SHARING WITH YOURSELVES
- ON A PERSONAL LEVEL, I WAS JOKING WITH SOME COLLEAGUES YESTERDAY, THAT THE RESILIENCE OF DIRECTORS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES IS CURRENTLY BEING TESTED, PARTICULARLY ON A TUESDAY MORNING UP UNTIL ABOUT TEN O'CLOCK AS WE SIT BY THE TELEPHONE IN ANTICIPATION OF RECEIVING THE CALL FROM OFSTED THAT WE WILL BE JOINED BY AN INSPECTION OF TEAM OF BETWEEN NINE AND ELEVEN INSPECTORS FOR FOUR WEEKS FOR THE SINGLE INSPECTION OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
- BUT, AS THEY SAY, MANY A TRUE WORD AND YOU CAN FILL IN THE REST
- THE RESILIENCE OF THE SECTOR AS A WHOLE HAS BEEN UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT WITH AN ANNUAL TURNOVER OF ABOUT ONE THIRD OF DIRECTORS OF CHILDREN'S SERVICES
- BUT ENOUGH OF MY CHALLENGES!
- THE THEME OF THIS CONFERENCE IS, I BELIEVE, APPPOSITE IN THAT IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THE PRESSURES AND STRESSES FACING US ACROSS THE EDUCATION SECTOR, NO MATTER WHICH PART OF THE SYSTEM WE INHABIT AND WITHIN WHICH WE OPERATE, ARE MORE COMPLEX AND DEMANDING THAN EVER BEFORE
- COMPLEX AND CONSTANT CHANGE CAN BE THREATENING AND DESTABILISING AND RESILIENT LEADERSHIP IS REQUIRED TO ABSORB THE CHANGE AND ASSIST OTHERS IN FINDING THEIR WAY THROUGH IT TO ACHIEVE SUCCESS FOR THEMSELVES AND FOR THOSE IN THEIR CARE
- AND I SUGGEST THAT WE, AS EDUCATION SYSTEM LEADERS, THEREFORE, HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY, BOTH MORAL AND PROFESSIONAL, TO BE PERSONALLY RESILIENT AND TO LEAD AND EMBED RESILIENCE
- TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE IN OUR PEOPLE, ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALIKE
- AND TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE IN OUR ORGANISATIONS
- I ASK YOUR INDULGENCE TO SHARE MY PERSONAL VIEWS OVER THE NEXT FEW MINUTES ON WHAT MIGHT BE MEANT BY RESILIENCE AND WHY IT IS IMPORTANT IN OUR WORK AND IN OUR LIVES

- THE ECOLOGIST BRIAN WALKER TELLS US THAT 'RESILIENCE IS THE CAPACITY OF A SYSTEM TO UNDERGO CHANGE AND STILL RETAIN ITS BASIC FUNCTION AND STRUCTURE'
- WHILST WALKER WAS REFERRING TO AN ECOLOGICAL SYSTEM, IT IS EQUALLY VALID TO APPLY THIS TO A HUMAN SYSTEM
- OTHER DEFINITIONS OF RESILIENCE INCLUDE 'THE ABILITY TO BOUNCE BACK FROM ADVERSITY AND TAKE ON NEW CHALLENGES'
- AND, AS MANY OF YOU MAY HAVE SEEN IN LAST WEEK'S TIMES EDUCATIONAL SUPPLEMENT, USE OF THE TERMS 'GRIT' OR 'CHARACTER' AS ATTRIBUTED TO ANGELA DUCKWORTH AND ARISTOTLE RESPECTIVELY
- CHARACTER, FOR ME, IS AN IMPORTANT NOTION – IT SPEAKS OF DEFINING QUALITIES OF OUR VERY ESSENCE – WHO WE ARE, WHAT WE BELIEVE – IT BRINGS A MORAL AND ETHICAL QUALITY
- HARDINESS, INNER STRENGTH, INNER CORE AND SPIRIT ALSO FEATURE IN THE VOACBULARY OF RESILIENCE
- I WOULD SUGGEST THAT, HOWEVER WE CHOOSE TO DESCRIBE IT, RESILIENCE IS, FOR ME, MULTI-FACETED
- SO WHAT ARE SOME OF THE FACETS OR FEATURES REQUIRED OF RESILIENT LEADERS?
- I BELIEVE THAT SOME OF THE ATTRIBUTES OR CHARACTER TRAITS NEEDED BOTH TO PRACTICE AND TO MODEL RESILIENT LEADERSHIP INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING :
- LET ME START WITH AGILITY, FLEXIBILITY, ADAPTABILITY – HAVING THE CAPABILITY OF BEING BENT REPEATEDLY WITHOUT INJURY OR DAMAGE – FOR ME THIS IS ABOUT MAINTAINING THAT INTEGRITY OF PURPOSE, NOT THROUGH RESISTANCE, BUT BY MEANS OF RECOGNISING, INTERNALISING, EMBRACING AND ACTING ON THE POSITIVES FROM ADVERSITY AND CHALLENGE
- MUCH HAS BEEN WRITTEN ABOUT ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP BY LEADING PROPONENTS SUCH AS PROFESSOR KEITH GRINT, FOR EXAMPLE.
- AND I BELEVE RESILIENT LEADERS ARE ADAPTIVE LEADERS FOR, AS WARREN BENNIS, A PROMINENT LEADERSHIP RESEARCHER WRITES:
- 'ADAPTIVE LEADERS MAY STRUGGLE IN THE DEFINING EXPERIENCES THEY ENCOUNTER, BUT ARE ABLE TO SUCCESSFULLY WORK THROUGH THEM AND SUCCEED. THEY LEARN NEW LESSONS, ACQUIRE NEW SKILLS, AND GATHER NEW INFORMATION THAT ENABLE THEM TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS. FURTHERMORE, ADAPTIVE LEADERS GO THROUGH A CONTINUAL PROCESS OF CHALLENGE, ADAPTATION, AND LEARNING, WHICH READIES THEM FOR THE NEXT CHALLENGE.'

- IN ADDITION, DR. LEONARD WONG SAID THAT ADAPTIVE LEADERS NEED TO BE MENTALLY FLEXIBLE AND AGILE AND EXHIBIT POISE UNDER PRESSURE.
- DOES THIS HAVE A RESONANCE FOR YOU IN YOUR EVERYDAY PROFESSIONAL LIFE?
- NEXT, I MAINTAIN THAT RESILIENT LEADERS REQUIRE STAMINA, DETERMINATION, TENACITY AND PERSEVERANCE IN ABUNDANCE
- THAT ABILITY TO SUSTAIN PROLONGED PHYSICAL AND/OR MENTAL EFFORT, TO KEEP FOCUSED, TO REMAIN STEADFAST IN PURPOSE
- THIS ALSO REQUIRES A STRONG INNER BELIEF IN ONESELF AND ONE'S ABILITIES
- I DO NOT MEAN AN ARROGANCE OR BOASTFUL PREOCCUPATION WITH SELF-PROMOTION, BUT A FIRM, QUIET TRUST IN WHAT YOU KNOW, WHAT YOU DO, HOW YOU DO IT AND, IMPORTANTLY, WHO YOU ARE
- RESILIENT LEADERS ARE OPTIMISTIC, NOT WILDLY, BLINDLY OPTIMISTIC, BUT THEIR OPTIMISM IS GROUNDED IN REALITY
- THEY HAVE THE ABILITY NOT ONLY TO SEE THAT, AS EINSTEIN SAID, 'IN THE MIDDLE OF DIFFICULTY LIES OPPORTUNITY' BUT ALSO TO EXTRAPOLATE THAT OPPORTUNITY AND MAKE SENSE OF IT FOR THEIR PEOPLE AND THEIR ORGANISATION IN A WAY THAT INSPIRES CONFIDENCE AND ENGENDERS FAITH
- IN ORDER TO IDENTIFY THESE OPPORTUNITIES AND ACT AS SENSE-MAKER, A LEADER NEEDS TO BE CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE
- IT IS A TRUISM ISN'T IT THAT IF YOU ALWAYS DO WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE, YOU'LL ALWAYS GET WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT
- CONTINUING TO DO THE SAME IN A FAST-MOVING, INCREASINGLY CHALLENGING, PERFORMANCE-DRIVEN, TECHNOLOGICALLY ADVANCING CONTEXT MIGHT BE LIKENED TO BEING RESISTANT RATHER THAN RESILIENT AND THE FUTILITY OF THIS IS ILLUSTRATED VERY WELL FOR ME BY THE JAPANESE PROVERB 'THE BAMBOO THAT BENDS IS STRONGER THAN THE OAK THAT RESISTS'
- RESILIENT LEADERS ARE THEMSELVES CREATIVE AND INNOVATIVE, BUT THEY ALSO NURTURE AND DEVELOP THESE ATTITUDES AND ATTRIBUTES IN THEIR PEOPLE, THUS BUILDING A RESILIENT ORGANISATION – ARTICULATING AND MODELLING EXPECTATIONS, SUPPORTING TALENT DEVELOPMENT AND ENSURING SUCCESSION PLANNING
- FINALLY, ALTHOUGH THERE ARE OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT LEADERS THAT I MIGHT HAVE TALKED ABOUT, I COULD NOT OMIT WHAT, FOR ME, IS ONE OF THE MOST DEFINING ATTRIBUTES IN THIS CONTEXT
- THAT IS EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

- I KNOW MANY OF YOU WILL HAVE HEARD ME SAY, ON MANY OCCASIONS, JUST HOW IMPORTANT I BELIEVE THE DEVELOPMENT OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IS FOR ADULTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE ALIKE AND I DO NOT APOLOGISE FOR THAT
- ACADEMICS AND LEADING PROPONENTS OF THE PLACE OF EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN LEADERSHIP TALK ABOUT THE IMPORTANCE OF BOTH THE INTELLIGENCE QUOTIENT AND THE EMOTIONAL QUOTIENT, THE IQ AND THE EQ
- THOSE COMPETENCIES/ATTRIBUTES ASSOCIATED WITH EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE, INTER ALIA, NOTABLY, OF COURSE, FROM THE WORK OF DANIEL GOLEMAN FROM HARVARD, INCLUDE SELF-AWARENESS, MANAGING ONESELF (OR SELF-CONTROL), BEING AWARE OF OTHERS AND MANAGING RELATIONSHIPS
- INTERESTINGLY, THIS ELEMENT OF SELF-CONTROL , ALONG WITH THE ELEMENT OF GRIT IDENTIFIED BY ANGELA DUCKWORTH IS THE SUBJECT OF HER RESEARCH INTO THE PREDICTABILITY OF SUCCESS IN LIFE, INCLUDING EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT, LIFETIME CAREER CHANGES AND DIVORCE
- SO, IF THESE ARE SOME OF THE CHARACTERISTICS OF RESILIENT LEADERS, WHY IS RESILIENCE IMPORTANT AND HOW DO WE NURTURE AND SUSTAIN OUR PERSONAL RESILIENCE?
- I HAVE SAID ON MANY OCCASIONS AND I REPEAT – I BELIEVE THAT ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL PURPOSES OF EDUCATION IS TO DEVELOP IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE THE ATTITUDES AND ATTRIBUTES WHICH BUILD THEIR RESILIENCE AS A PLATFORM FOR LIFE SKILLS
- THIS NEEDS TO SIT SEAMLESSLY ALONGSIDE THE DEVELOPMENT OF THEIR COGNITIVE ABILITIES
- WITH RESILIENT FOUNDATIONS THEY WILL HAVE A GREATER CHANCE OF POSSESSING AN INNER CAPABILITY AND PROPENSITY TO COPE, AN ATTITUDE AND APPROACH TO LEARNING WHICH IS NOT THREATENED OR MARRED BY THE FEAR OF FAILURE, BUT SPURRED BY THE DESIRE TO CREATE AND INNOVATE, AN ATTITUDE AND APPROACH TO SELF WHICH IS CHARACTERISED BY A SOLID LEVEL OF SELF-ESTEEM AND CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY AND THEIR VERY BEING
- YOUNG PEOPLE WILL HAVE DEVELOPED THE TRAITS SOUGHT BY EMPLOYERS AND, I AM PLEASED TO NOTE, FEATURED IN THE RECENTLY PUBLISHED PEARSON REPORT 'MAKING EDUCATION WORK', THOSE SO-CALLED SOFTER SKILLS
- SOME MIGHT SAY THAT SEEING RESILIENCE AS A SOFTER SKILL IS SOMEWHAT OF AN OXYMORON
- NEVERTHELESS, HOWEVER WE CATEGORISE IT, RESILIENCE IS UP THERE AT THE TOP OF MY LIST

- AND THERE IS NO BETTER WAY, IN MY OPINION, TO INSTILL AND EMBED RESILIENCE IN YOUR SCHOOL COMMUNITY THAN TO DO WHAT YOU DO ON AN EVERYDAY BASIS – THAT IS, MODEL THE SKILLS, BEHAVIOURS, ATTITUDES AND ATTRIBUTES YOU ASPIRE TO INSPIRE IN OUR YOUNG PEOPLE
- AND HOW DO WE SUPPORT EACH OTHER IN MAINTAINING AND STRENGTHENING OUR OWN RESILIENCE?
- CLEARLY, OUR OWN PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND NETWORKS ARE CRUCIAL IN THIS, BUT SO, TOO, IS WHAT IS MANIFEST BY THIS CONFERENCE
- THAT IS A STRONG PROFESSIONAL PEER SUPPORT NETWORK OF HEADTEACHER COLLEAGUES ALONGSIDE THE AUTHORITY AND OUR NEWLY FORMED PARTNERS IN THE GUISE OF THE BUCKINGHAMSHIRE LEARNING TRUST – ALL BOUND BY OUR COMMON MORAL PURPOSE OF WANTING TO DO OUR BEST FOR THE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IN OUR CARE
- COLLEAGUES, IN CONCLUDING, I COULD THINK OF NO MORE APPROPRIATE TRIBUTE TO THE IMPORTANCE OF RESILIENCE IN OUR LIVES THAN TO QUOTE FROM THAT BEAUTIFUL POEM ‘IF’ BY RUDYARD KIPLING
- I APOLOGISE IN ADVANCE TO THE POET AND TO YOURSELVES AS I AM QUOTING SELECTIVELY AND ADDING AN ALTERNATIVE ENDING

IF YOU CAN KEEP YOUR HEAD WHEN ALL ABOUT YOU
 ARE LOSING THEIRS AND BLAMING IT ON YOU,
 IF YOU CAN TRUST YOURSELF WHEN ALL MEN DOUBT YOU,
 BUT MAKE ALLOWANCE FOR THEIR DOUBTING TOO;

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IF YOU CAN MEET WITH TRIUMPH AND DISASTER
 AND TREAT THOSE TWO IMPOSTORS JUST THE SAME;

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OR WATCH THE THINGS YOU GAVE YOUR LIFE TO, BROKEN,
 AND STOOP AND BUILD’ EM UP WITH WORN-OUT TOOLS;

.....

IF YOU CAN FORCE YOUR HEART AND NERVE AND SINEW
TO SERVE YOUR TURN LONG AFTER THEY ARE GONE,
AND SO HOLD ON WHEN THERE IS NOTHING IN YOU
EXCEPT THE WILL WHICH SAYS TO THEM: 'HOLD ON!'
IF YOU CAN TALK WITH CROWDS AND KEEP YOUR VIRTUE,

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IF YOU CAN FILL THE UNFORGIVING MINUTE
WITH SIXTY SECONDS' WORTH OF DISTANCE RUN,
YOURS IS THE EARTH AND EVERYTHING THAT'S IN IT,
AND – WHICH IS MORE – YOU'LL BE A MAN, MY SON!
AND, COLLEAGUES, RESILIENT LEADERSHIP WILL BE WON.