

Secondary and Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of Their Role in promoting Hope and Aspiration

Dr Samantha Hinds



Background and Rationale

Government initiatives are focusing more on supporting mental health difficulties in schools (Carter, 2015; DfE, 2016). Difficulties with one's SEMH are associated with an increase in risk of disruption to education, poor attainment, substance misuse and depression (DfE, 2016).

Research has found that increased hopefulness and aspiration is associated with reduced SEMH difficulties (Ciarrochi, Heaven & Davies, 2007; Gerard & Booth, 2015; Marques, Lopez & Pais-Ribeiro, 2009).

Within the current literature, there is limited research into teachers' views of promoting hope and aspiration in their students.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers view their role in promoting, in their students, hope, aspiration and a future possible self?
2. How do teachers work to promote hope and aspiration in their students?
3. What do teachers perceive the barriers and challenges to be when working to promote hope and aspiration in their students?

Methodology

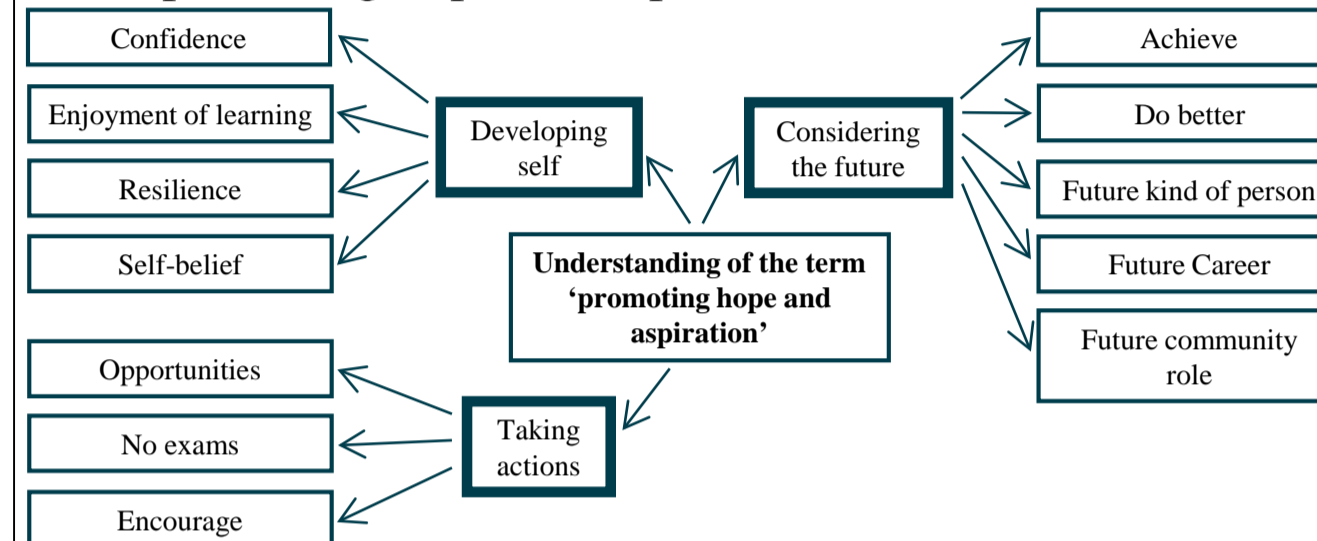
- Epistemological Stance: Social constructionist
- Design: Qualitative, semi-structured interviews
- Participants: Nine teachers (2 male)
- Data Analysis: Applied Thematic Analysis (Guest, MacQueen & Namey, 2012)

References:

- Carter, A. (2015). *Carter Review of Initial Teacher Training (ITT)*. Crown Copyright.
- Ciarrochi, J., Heaven, P. C. L., & Davies, F. (2007). The Impact of Hope, Self-Esteem, and Attributional Style on Adolescents' School Grades and Emotional Well-Being: A Longitudinal Study. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 41(6), 1161-1178.
- Department for Education (DfE). (2016). *Mental Health and Behaviour in Schools: Departmental Advice for School Staff*. London: Crown Copyright.
- Gerard, J. M., & Booth, M. Z. (2015). Family and School Influences on Adolescents' Adjustment: The Moderating Role of Youth Hopefulness and Aspirations for the Future. *Journal of Adolescence*, 44, 1-16.
- Guest, G., MacQueen, K. M., & Namey, E. E. (2012). *Applied Thematic Analysis*. London: Sage.
- Marques, S. C., Lopez, S. J., & Pais-Ribeiro, J. L. (2009). "Building Hope for the Future": A Program to Foster Strengths in Middle-School Students. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 12(1), 139-152.

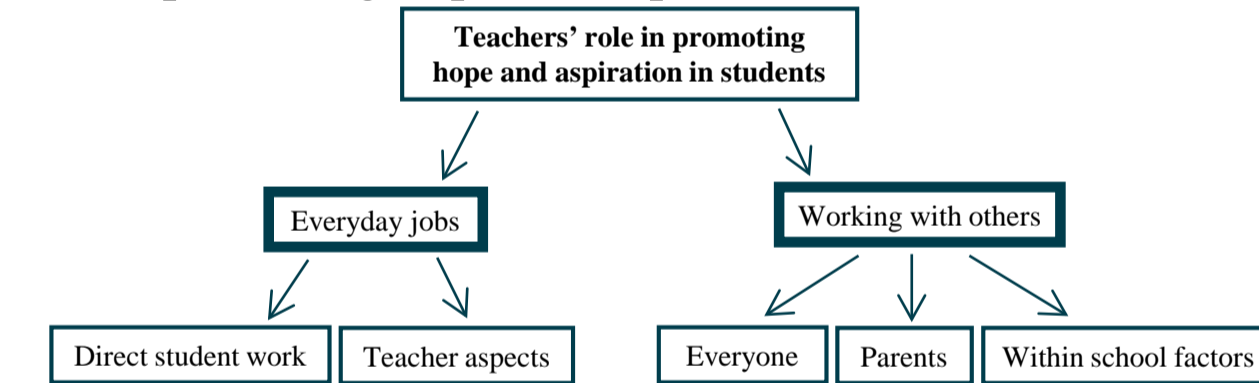
Results

Thematic map and quotes for teachers' understanding of the term 'promoting hope and aspiration':



"encouraging them to consider their future and their place in the future, their role within the community, their family, what sort of person they want to be"
 "Just giving them confidence, whatever they, whatever they want to achieve in life. Just giving them that confidence, that yeah go for it"

Thematic map and quotes for RQ1: Teachers' views of their role in promoting hope and aspiration:



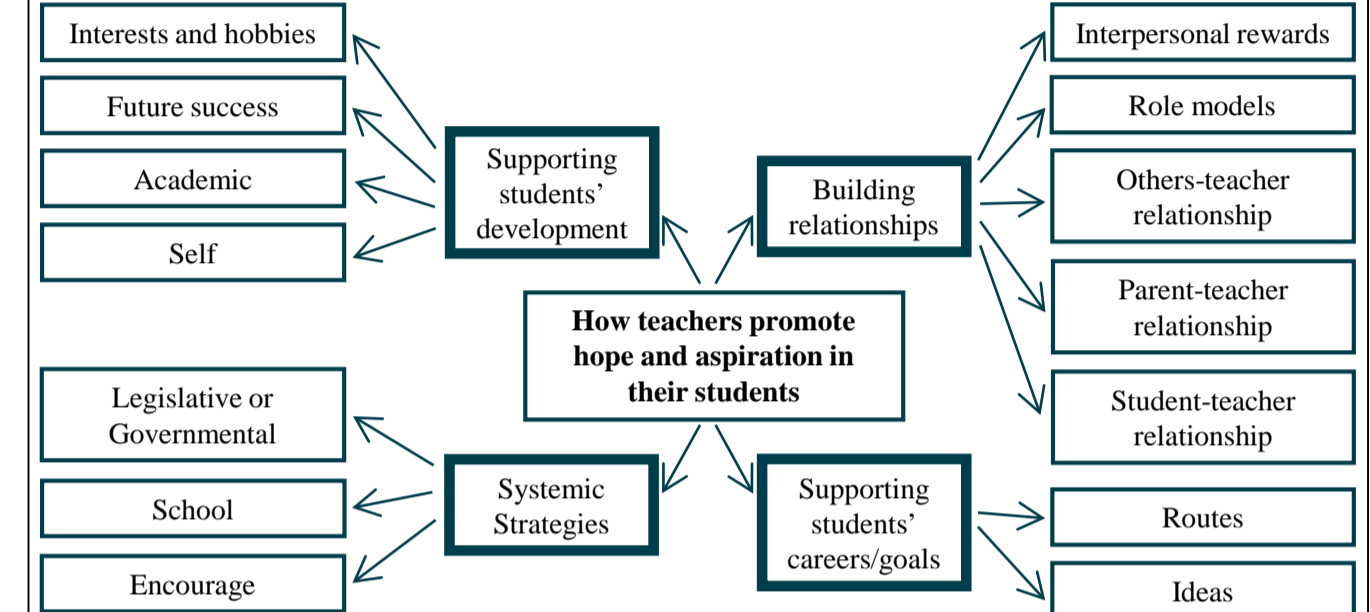
"I think that it should be parents and family first and foremost that encourage that sense of hope and aspiration. I think within the school it's important that we do it because not all children have it, it should be parents, but it's not always. So, we play an important role."
 "What we say, as teachers is really important because we actually can make massive change and difference to young people. For the good, and also in the other way. If we say to somebody 'don't be ridiculous', they can leave thinking, 'well, I'm never going to do that', and that can stay with them. So, we've got to be really careful."
 "if we can't do it, or help them to have that aspiration for their future, then, you know, we're not doing our job properly"... for me personally, I think without them being aspirational about having a future and why education is important to that, they are much more difficult to teach and it makes your job much more difficult"

Summary of Findings

- RQ1: Teachers view their role as important; particularly for students who may have limited access to positive experiences and role models.
- RQ2: Teachers have strategies, skills and awareness of what needs to be implemented.
- RQ3: Teachers spoke about a 'perceived' role as opposed to the 'actual' role that they are able to do. Due to barriers: lack of time; restrictions of funding and resources; lack of opportunities; students' low self-esteem/being 'shut-off'.

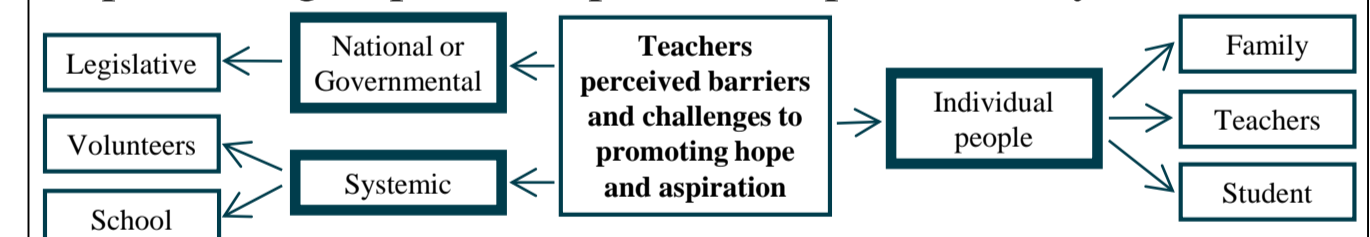
Results

Thematic map and quotes for RQ2: How teachers work to promote hope and aspiration:



"cause there's certain teachers that will matter to everybody"
 "...don't want to be a Scientist but they might want to...be a wildlife expert or a Sports Nutritionist or whatever"... "there is always something where that might be suited to a career"
 "I think we do a lot of work here about the different types of goals, short term and long term. We do encourage students to think short term and long term"... "So I guess really identifying the things are important to that student and then working out the paths in which they can get there because I think if you have that long term picture, you can have a better grasp of the kind of route to take to get there, which I think is important you need to know where you're headed to in order to make the best path"

Thematic map and quotes for RQ3: Barriers and challenges to promoting hope and aspiration as perceived by teachers:



"I just can't spend the time with kids"... "time helping them as much as you'd like to"
 "I'd say one of the barriers is that when you have somebody with very low self-esteem, and can't see where they're gonna go, sometimes even hearing praise is quite difficult for them and they just won't accept it and sometimes those pupils will actually switch off to the kind of praise"
 "I'd love to see more and go to workplaces and actually get outside the classroom. But you just can't do it because you're away from your actual class itself which costs money and you stop the wider purpose of our learning, which is to give them the education part of the exams"
 "In terms of classroom teaching, funding. You could do so many wonderful things if you had a little bit of funding to make it more fun and, you know, to inspire them"

Implications and Considerations

- Teacher training in building hope and aspiration.
- Teacher supervision for reflection and psycho-education.
- Systemic support for strategies and school approaches.
- Practice-based evidence exploring others' views or the practice of others to identify 'what works'.
- Review of legislative guidance and its role in supporting promotion of SEMH, hope, aspiration and character strengths e.g. access to opportunities, workload, curriculum variability and flexibility.