Within school factors

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)

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’.

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 it’s role in promoting SEMH, hope, aspiration and character strengths e.g. access to opportunities, workload, curriculum variability and flexibility.

Results

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

- Confidence
- Enjoyment of learning
- Resilience
- Self-belief
- Opportunities
- No exams
- Encourage

“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:

- Everyday jobs
- Working with others

“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, they, you know, we’re not doing our job properly”

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

- Interpersonal rewards
- Future success
- Academic
- Self

“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...”

“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”

“I just can’t spend the time with kids”

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

- Systemic or Governmental
- Legislative
- School
- Volunteers
- Natural

“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.”