

**AUTHORS:**<sup>1</sup>Dr Nadia Swanepoel <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4142-7409><sup>2</sup>Dr Joyce West <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3916-9754>**AFFILIATION:**<sup>1</sup>Lecturer,  
Department of Early Childhood  
Education,  
University of Pretoria.<sup>2</sup>Senior lecturer,  
Department of Early Childhood  
Education,  
University of Pretoria.**CORRESPONDENCE TO:**

nadia.swanepoel1@up.ac.za

**DATES:**

Published: 30 August 2024

**HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:**Swanepoel, N. & West, J., 2024.  
Collaborative conversations with  
teachers about hope: during and  
after Covid-19. KOERS — Bulletin  
for Christian Scholarship, 89(1).  
Available at: [https://doi.org/10.19108/  
KOERS.89.1.2573](https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.89.1.2573)**COPYRIGHT:**© 2024. The Author(s).  
Published under the Creative  
Commons Attribution License.

# Collaborative conversations with teachers about hope: during and after COVID-19

## ABSTRACT

The concept of hope, from both a secular and Christian perspective, has been debated in many disciplines for centuries. Ideas around the phenomenon of hope have recently expanded in the field of education, owing to the major changes and challenges teachers had to face during the COVID-19 pandemic. Contemplating the concept of the source or existence of hope, especially during challenging times, requires careful investigation into how people interpret and experience hope. Therefore, this qualitative study focuses on teachers' interpretations and experiences of hope during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. This study was conducted through two collaborative conversations held with teachers as part of a community engagement project stretching across the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. Deductive data analysis was done through ATLAS.ti. The findings revealed that the teachers had a similar understanding of hope. Furthermore, it was also found that hope cannot be described solely from a secular or Christian perspective. However, the participants' beliefs regarding the source of hope differed. These beliefs provided insight into whether participants' understanding of hope was based on a secular or Christian perspective. From a secular perspective, hope was understood from the hope theory of Snyder et al. (1991). According to this theory, hope results from pathways thinking (planning various routes to a given goal), agency to reach a goal, and goal setting. In contrast, from a Christian perspective, hope views God as the source of hope owing to his promises. The invisible force of hope, whether agency-based or faith-based, was found to be central to teacher agency; therefore, the term "faith-based, purpose-driven hope" emerged from the data. Recommendations are made regarding the importance of nurturing teachers' hope to improve educational outcomes.

**Keywords:** Christian hope; COVID-19 pandemic; goal-orientated; hope theory; pathways thinking; secular hope; teachers; teacher agency

## OPSOMMING

Daar is al eeue lank in baie dissiplines oor hoop as konsep, uit 'n sekulêre sowel as 'n Christelike perspektief, gedebatteer. Idees oor hoop as verskynsel het onlangs in die onderwysveld toegeneem weens die groot veranderinge en uitdagings wat onderwysers gedurende die Covid-19-pandemie moes trotseer. Besinning oor die bron of bestaan van hoop as konsep, veral in uitdagende tye, vereis 'n noukeurige ondersoek na hoe mense hoop vertolk en beleef. Daarom is hierdie kwalitatiewe studie toegespits op onderwysers se interpretasies en belevings van hoop tydens en ná die Covid-19-pandemie. Hierdie studie is uitgevoer deur middel van twee samewerkende gesprekke met onderwysers as deel van 'n gemeenskapsbetrokkenheidsprojek wat oor die duur van die Covid-19-pandemie gestrek het. Deduktiewe dataontleding is met behulp van ATLAS.ti gedoen. Die bevindinge het aan die lig gebring dat die onderwysers 'n soortgelyke begrip van hoop gehad het. Voorts is daar ook bevind dat hoop nie slegs vanuit óf 'n sekulêre óf 'n Christelike perspektief beskryf kan word nie. Die deelnemers se oortuigings aangaande die bron van hoop het egter verskil. Hierdie oortuigings het insig gebied in die vraag of die deelnemers se begrip van hoop op 'n sekulêre of Christelike perspektief gebaseer was. Vanuit 'n sekulêre perspektief is hoop vanuit die hoopteorie van Snyder *et al.* (1991) verstaan. Volgens hierdie teorie spruit hoop uit sogenaamde roetedenke (om 'n verskeidenheid roetes na

'n gegewe doelwit te beplan), werksaamheid/agentskap om 'n doelwit te bereik en doelwitstelling. Daarteenoor word God vanuit 'n Christelike perspektief as die bron van hoop beskou weens sy beloftes. Daar is gevind dat hoop se onsigbare krag, hetsy dit op werksaamheid/agentskap of geloof gebaseer is, sentraal tot onderwyserswerksaamheid/onderwysersagentskap staan; daarom het die term "geloofsgebaseerde, doelgedrewe hoop" uit die data te voorskyn gekom. Aanbevelings word gemaak oor die belangrikheid van die koestering en versterking van die hoop wat onderwysers het om opvoedkundige uitkomst te verbeter.

**Sleutelwoorde:** Christelike hoop; Covid-19-pandemie; doelgerig; hoopteorie; onderwysers; onderwyserswerksaamheid/-agentskap; roetedenke; sekulêre hoop

---

## 1. Introduction

Over the centuries, the concept of hope, as a multidisciplinary topic, has been critically debated from both a religious and a secular perspective. Philosophical questions have been asked: Is hope an emotion, a duty, a command, a promise or a right? Can hope be controlled, developed, created or enhanced by an individual? Does it come from a source or within? (Day, 1969). Even famous philosophers, such as Aristotle and Plato, have referred to both hope and hopelessness by associating them with confidence and courage (Gravlee, 2000). Hope has also been described as an attitude with cognitive components because it responds to facts about the possibility of future events. Furthermore, hope has a cognitive component, as it differs from mere expectations and reflects and draws upon our thoughts and desires (Bloeser & Stahl, 2022). Connections between hope and fear have also been considered, as both of them "depend on our sense that the future is open, that there are possibilities, and when the future seems closed, or as the future transitions into the present and the past, both hope and fear are transformed" (Gravlee, 2000, p. 19).

Although the concept of hope has been a topic of discussion in various fields (i.e., psychology, medicine and education) for ages, ideas around the phenomenon of hope have recently expanded owing to events related to the COVID-19 pandemic. Evidence of this is the increase in the prevalence of hope research across all disciplines since 2020 (Colla, Williams, Oades & Camacho-Morles, 2022). Contemplating the concept, the source or existence of hope during and after a pandemic requires careful investigation into how people interpret and experience hope. This study focuses on teachers' interpretations and experiences of hope during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, as the pandemic resulted in a global education system dilemma, placing teachers right in the centre of it (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). During the pandemic, education had to continue despite a myriad of challenges, including switching from traditional classrooms (i.e., face-to-face instruction) to remote or online learning (Agnoletto & Queiroz, 2020; Alea *et al.*, 2020; Neuwirth *et al.*, 2021; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). This switch significantly altered teachers' and learners' teaching and learning experiences (Alam, 2020). One of the most prominent challenges teachers faced was limited previous exposure to online teaching and learning, setting up and using technological devices, making homes conducive to teaching and learning (Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021), the digital divide in an unequal socioeconomic education system (Chisango & Marongwe, 2021; Hassell *et al.*, 2021) and overcoming their anxiety about using technology (Razkane *et al.*, 2021). Pedagogical challenges, resources, connectivity and bandwidth availability were also problematic (Alam, 2020). Furthermore, teachers had to deal with families who feared for their health, security and income (Daniel, 2020). Owing to these challenges, teachers had to be resilient, have agency and take on multiple roles while reassuring learners and parents that teaching and learning activities would continue (Daniel, 2020; Neuwirth *et al.*, 2021). Questions arose about how teachers dealt with these challenges and hope's role in coping

with these difficult circumstances. Therefore, in this study, we engaged in collaborative discussions with teachers regarding their views on hope and how they dealt with the challenges caused by the pandemic.

The main research question of this study was formulated as follows: How can the concept of hope be defined within education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic? To support our main research question, we also investigated the teaching and learning challenges teachers faced during the pandemic and how they overcame them. Furthermore, we explored hope's role in helping teachers remain hopeful amidst difficult circumstances. Lastly, teacher agency was explored as a hope-related concept.

## 2. Contextualisation and objectives

This study originated from a longitudinal community engagement research project launched in 2017 and funded by a South African university. The project included regular training workshops and reflective and collaborative discussions on education topics. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the project aimed to support teachers in the community and provide them with a collaborative platform to voice their teaching and learning challenges while sharing ideas that could assist others. During our conversations, the concept of hope from a Christian perspective emerged as a prominent theme. Hence, we found it imperative to delve deeper into the concept of hope to improve our understanding of this concept from a secular and a Christian perspective. The hope theory of Snyder *et al.* (1991), the Bible and theological literature served as the guiding framework of this study.

## 3. Defining the concept of hope

Hope is a multifaceted concept due to its multidisciplinary nature. Dufault and Martocchio (1985, p. 380) argue that hope is “a multidimensional dynamic life force” characterised by expectations of what is realistically possible and personally significant. When the concept of hope is explored from a secular and religious perspective, it is clear that a stark contrast exists. However, no matter how hope is defined, when various definitions of hope are explored, it becomes evident that hope involves human expectations and possibilities (Fowler, 2022; McCormick, 2017). Since hope can move people to action, it can also create an impact and bring about transformation (Fowler, 2022).

Hope is an attitude, emotion, belief, thought or desire that motivates individuals to pursue their goals (McCormick, 2017; Mosley *et al.*, 2020). Feldman *et al.* (2009) and Feldman and Dreher (2012) suggest that hope predicts progress towards goal attainment. Associating hope with goal attainment aligns with a secular view of hope, such as the hope theory of Snyder *et al.* (1991). A theological perspective is worth investigating in arguing that hope is about beliefs. Therefore, in this study, we used both a secular and a theological perspective in exploring the concept of hope.

### 3.1 Secular hope

Secular hope refers to an understanding of hope that is separated from belief or religious rule. From a secular perspective, the hope theory of Snyder *et al.* (1991) defines hope as a goal-directed thought process that comprises three components: goals, pathways and agency. The hope theory endeavours to understand the reasons why people have hope or remain hopeful when faced with adversity (Snyder, 2002). Snyder (in Rand & Cheavens, 2009) found that hope correlates with people's goals and agency to create useful pathways in reaching their goals. Furthermore, hope is viewed as a “learned way of thinking about oneself in relation to goals” (Snyder, 1994, p. 23) and as the perceived ability to develop pathways and motivate oneself via agency thinking to achieve desired goals (Savahl, 2020; Scioli *et al.*, 2011; Snyder, 2002). Snyder *et al.* (1991) explain that agency and pathways are indispensable goal-directed components to successful goal attainment. Thus, hope is

described as a reflection of someone's goals, plan of action to achieve those goals (pathways) and, subsequently, his or her commitment, determination and motivation to carry out the plan of action (agency) (Chang *et al.*, 2018; Snyder *et al.*, 2003). According to the hope theory, hope provides the capacity to develop workable goals, find pathways to reach those goals (pathway thinking) and become motivated to use those pathways (agency) (Snyder, 2005). When facing obstacles in attaining goals, alternative pathways need to be developed. Agency drives the development of pathways to pursue our goals successfully (Snyder, 2005).

When individuals have agency and create pathways to pursue a goal, they may experience positive or negative emotional reactions influencing their pursuit of it (Snyder, 2002). Positive emotional reactions either increase or sustain motivation, whereas negative emotional reactions increase stress and result in losing sight of goals. Therefore, the concept of hope from a secular perspective is directly associated with an individual's emotions (Snyder, 2002).

With hope being subjective and related to a person's emotional reaction, the measurement of hope in individuals is highly debated. Various researchers (e.g., Lopez *et al.*, 2000; Snyder *et al.*, 1991) have developed measuring tools to assess a person's level of hope. The purpose of these assessments is not only to establish someone's level of hope but also to predict the outcome of his or her goal attainment and to identify individuals who require support (Snyder, 1994). The first assessment tool designed to measure hope was the Adult Dispositional Hope Scale (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). This self-report questionnaire assesses dispositional hope in adults aged over 15 years with a scale of eight (low levels of hope) to a maximum of 64 (high levels of hope) (Snyder *et al.*, 1991). Lopez *et al.* (2000) report an average hope score of 48. Lopez (2010) argues that people who score higher view the future as better than the present and believe they have the power to make it so. When obstacles prevent high-hope individuals from achieving their goals, they can still engage in support and resources and implement alternative pathways to achieve their goals (Lopez, 2010; Seligman, 2002). Higher levels of hope are, therefore, argued to be indicative of resilience and a general tendency to take proactive steps to manage concerns based on achieving set goals and overcoming obstacles leading to the goal (McDermott *et al.*, 2017; Snyder *et al.*, 1991; Worgan, 2013).

In contrast to high-hope individuals, people who score lower on the hope scale have less agency. They also give up more quickly on their goals when encountering obstacles, as they may struggle to think of alternative pathways around them. Another aspect that can affect hope is a lack of support and resources (Lopez, 2010). Furthermore, individuals who struggle with low levels of hope may be unable to use feedback from failure to improve their future performance (Lopez, 2010). Low levels of hope are demonstrated in frustration, a lack of confidence and low self-esteem. Snyder *et al.* (1991) advise less-hopeful individuals to set fewer and more realistic goals and more-hopeful individuals to set goals more challenging goals.

From a secular perspective, hope can be measured, is action-based, can be constructed through goal-orientated thinking and can predict goal attainment. In this study, it is necessary to consider teachers' goals, agency and pathways thinking when contemplating the concept of hope from a secular perspective. Furthermore, their emotional reaction (i.e., confidence, fear, courage and desires) to the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic should also be considered. However, it is also necessary to consider hope from a religious perspective, as it can provide an insightful understanding of teachers' hope.

### **3.2 Christian hope**

Christian hope is associated with God's divine promises and an eschatological reality in a believer's mind, evident throughout the Bible (Alexander & Rosner, 2000; Bloeser & Stahl, 2022). For example, in the Old Testament, we see the significance of Abraham and the promise of blessing all nations, the promise of a future king descended from the tribe

of Judah, promises of blessings tied to the house of David and, ultimately, the messianic expectations that take place in the New Testament. Further examples of the promise that the Lord is near are found in Philippians 4:5, Luke 19:13 and Matthew 10:32-33 (Alexander & Rosner, 2000). It is, therefore, evident that God himself is the theological ground or source of human hope. To further substantiate this, one can look at Romans 15:13, where Paul refers to God as the "God of hope" (all Scriptures quoted from the Bible, English Standard Version, 2016).

While various books in the Bible provide Christians with a deeper understanding of hope, two books can be highlighted with direct reference to hope: the book of Isaiah, one of the major prophetic writings of the Old Testament, and Romans – one of Paul's epistles – in the New Testament. There is also a clear connection between these two books, as Paul cites Isaiah 16 times in Romans (Oss, 1992). The book of Isaiah was written to give hope to the people during the Babylonian exile (6th century BC). In Isaiah 43:1-2, God makes clear his promise to his people that no harm will come to them, that they belong to him and that they should, therefore, have no fear. So, in Isaiah, the idea of hope is associated with God's promise to look after his people while in exile.

Furthermore, in Isaiah 43:5, the Lord says: "Fear not, for I am with you." This command provides an understanding that Christian hope is not only associated with God's promise but also results from faithfulness and obedience (Alexander & Rosner, 2000). Paul explains in Romans that the source of hope is beyond people's ability and that we receive hope by believing and trusting in God. In Romans 12:12, Paul writes that Christians must "[r]ejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer". These verses also highlight hope as being receptive and command, as mentioned earlier in Isaiah 43:5. Earlier in the book of Romans (5:3-5), Paul speaks about hope being "produced" in times of trouble and suffering. People are often discouraged when faced with trials and tragedies (Oliphint & Casad, 2016). However, from the Christian perspective of hope, people should place their trust in God, with the knowledge that he will provide (Isa. 40:31; Rom. 12:19). In the books of Isaiah and Romans, it is evident that hope is the result of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Hope is thus viewed as a divine promise or gift by which Christians long for the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as a source of happiness (Alexander & Rosner, 2000; Wormell, 2023).

God is regarded as the source of hope, grounded in his love and promise to his people (Alexander & Rosner, 2000; Oliphint & Casad, 2016). Therefore, hopelessness, from a Christian perspective, can be associated with unbelieving, faithlessness or secularism, where hopes and promises are empty (Alexander & Rosner, 2000; 1 Thess. 4:13). The Scriptures make it clear that unbelievers "have no hope" (1 Thess. 4:13; Eph. 2:12).

In contrast with the hope theory of Snyder *et al.* (1991), Christian hope refers to placing one's trust in Christ's promises and not relying on one's own agency but on the strength and grace of the Holy Spirit (Wormell, 2023). Therefore, Christian hope is beyond human strength, is not action-based and cannot result from personal agency, goal setting or pathway thinking as argued from a secular perspective (Oliphint & Casad, 2016). Christian hope is a gift received by believers from God owing to his message to "be with you" (Isa. 43:1-2) if you follow his command and believe and trust in him. In addition, hope is given to all of Christ's followers as an internal source of strength (Isa. 40:31).

When the concept of hope is contemplated from a secular or Christian perspective in this study, it is necessary to consider teachers' beliefs regarding the source of hope during the circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Investigating teachers' views of hope and the reasons for being hopeful or hopeless can contribute to a better understanding of how teachers can be supported so that they are able to support their learners.

## 4. Teacher agency and hope

Teacher agency has gained much attention over the past ten years, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Imants & Van der Wal, 2020). Damşa *et al.* (2021) explain that teacher agency is teachers' willingness to act upon their ideas and plans to transform current thinking or practice. Teacher agency can potentially drive and shape teachers' actions concerning digital tools and software (Damşa *et al.*, 2021). In this study, teacher agency should be seen in light of the constraints teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic (Damşa *et al.*, 2021).

Various correlations exist between teacher agency and hope. Both concepts seek to move forward and improve the livelihood of those around them by enabling individuals to be successful in the face of challenges. Lopez (2010, p. 42) argues that the practice of hope requires teachers to "spread hope by encouraging autonomy, modelling a hopeful lifestyle, promoting strengths-based development, and telling stories about how students and teachers overcome big obstacles to realise important goals". Snyder (2005, p. 75) explains that he has worked in classrooms where teachers have been able to create a classroom atmosphere where hope is so evident that "one can almost touch it". Consequently, the argument can be made that teacher agency and hope in education share the same ontological root and are, therefore, interwoven (Jacobs, 2005; Webb, 2010). The close relationship between agency and hope is also evident in educational psychology research, where hope has been identified as predicting achievement (Hanson, 2009).

Teachers' agency and hope are very significant in education and should be evident in both physical and virtual classroom environments if teachers strive to become agents of change (Bourn, 2016; Van der Heijden, 2015). This was evident during the COVID-19 pandemic when teachers were required to have agency and hope to face a myriad of challenges for teaching and learning to continue. Furthermore, teachers had to spread hope to learners to motivate them to keep up with the academic demands against all odds. Therefore, it can be argued that agency and hope were necessary to continue teaching in challenging times.

## 5. Research methodology

In this qualitative research study, oral inquiry was done through collaborative conversations with teachers. This was done to understand better how "hope" can be defined within education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Collaborative discussions were used as our data collection method to help us better understand the teaching and learning challenges teachers faced during the pandemic, how they overcame the challenges and what role hope played in helping teachers remain hopeful amidst difficult circumstances.

Oral inquiry (conversations) – when two or more participants (i.e., teachers) collaboratively explore their experiences by examining particular issues, educational concepts, texts and even learners' work (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993) – was the best data collection method for our study owing to its collaborative and personal nature. As part of an oral inquiry, collaborative conversations are not "senseless teacher talk" without purpose (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 30). Instead, it is a purposeful process where the participants collaborate and build on one another's insights and experiences, providing access to various perspectives for posing and solving problems (Feldman, 1999).

Owing to this qualitative study's personal and subjective nature, an interpretive paradigm was used as a lens when the data collected through collaborative conversations were analysed. Collaborative conversations were held with Foundation Phase teachers who had been sampled through convenience sampling, as they were part of a bigger community engagement project. The conversations held with teachers took place during two two-hour-long workshops. The first conversation, with 20 teachers, took place in 2021 during the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to COVID-19 safety restrictions and regulations, the conversation

was held virtually. In 2022, the second conversation took place face-to-face after the COVID-19 restrictions had been lifted. These conversations were audio-recorded and transcribed after obtaining informed consent. Data analysis was done using a deductive approach – open coding thematic analysis – with ATLAS.ti 23, a qualitative software programme.

Ethical clearance was obtained from the university as this study formed part of a university-led community engagement project. All the participants were informed about the purpose of the study and their right to participate or withdraw at any stage. They were assured that their identity would be kept confidential throughout the study.

## 6. Findings and discussions

To answer the research questions of the study, we present the findings that emerged from the data. During the qualitative data analysis process, we identified various codes related to COVID-19 and the concept and role of hope from a Christian and secular perspective within the teaching context. From the identified codes and categories, three themes emerged. These are discussed below in alignment with the existing literature. The three themes are as follows:

- Theme 1: cumbersome challenges teachers faced during and after COVID-19
- Theme 2: defining indicators of hope
- Theme 3: sources of hope

In the discussion of the themes that emerged from the data, direct quotations are provided to substantiate the argument and strengthen the credibility of the findings. At the end of each direct quotation, the ATLAS.ti number is provided in brackets to increase the transparency of the qualitative data. The first number in the bracket is the document number, and the second is the quotation number.

The main research question of this study aims to define the concept of hope within education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. From the data, it was evident that gaining a deeper understanding of teachers' hope necessitates an awareness of the vast number of challenges they faced during the pandemic. Furthermore, connections were made between the teachers' understanding of hope and the challenges they faced. Consequently, the first theme relates to the challenges teachers faced during COVID-19.

### 6.1 *Theme 1: Cumbersome challenges teachers faced during and after COVID-19*

From the data, it was evident that the teachers experienced wide-ranging challenges. The participants explained that "the pandemic has really put everybody in a vulnerable position" (4:56), which they all found "incredibly difficult and frustrating" (4:137). Some participants explained that they struggled with their "emotional well-being" (4:67), as well as the "emotional well-being of the children" (4:67). Other challenges they experienced were "self-care" (4:76), "safety" (4:77) and increased "workload" (4:75), which led to "burnout because you are constantly providing support to every child regardless of what time it is, sitting late, making teaching aids so that you can use it in class" (4:89). One participant stated that "Foundation Phase educators ... don't get a break" (4:124).

The prominent challenges most participants experienced were grouped into three categories: expectations during difficult times, challenges faced with technology and inequality, and uncertainty and fear.

### 6.1.1 *Category 1: The challenge of expectations and trying to meet them during difficult circumstances*

From the data, it became clear that the participants experienced a lot of “pressure” (4:6; 4:78) from various educational stakeholders, such as the National Department of Basic Education, their schools and parents. For example, one participant said that “the demands from the Department were a little bit unrealistic” (4:5), and all participants agreed. The participants also elaborated on the expectations of the school and the parents to find strategies to continue educating the learners. The participants used a variety of strategies to support learners and continue their education in one way or another. However, regardless of their chosen strategy, they all faced cumbersome challenges. For example, one participant explained that they “first used the one week on and one week off [strategy]” (4:35) or “one day on and one day off” (4:35), a strategy called “rotation” (4:54) to reduce the number of children in a class and to adhere to social distancing requirements. However, this participant explained that it did not really work because the learners “missed out on a lot” (4:35; 4:54).

All the participants agreed and elaborated on how, for example, language skills were affected. They explained that “especially like in English and Afrikaans, they suffered ... We had to brush up on their reading and writing skills” (4:31), “Reading was really affected” (4:125), and “Reading and writing definitely took a knock” (4:130). Another participant explained that she was so concerned about one of her learners’ language skills that she told his father: “You can bring him early in the morning, even if it’s between 6:00 and 06:30 so that I can just spend time with him, especially with assessment.” (4:50) She said: “He couldn’t do his work on his own, I had to support him all the way, this is the effect that this pandemic has on some learners.” (4:50)

Another challenge that arose from the rotation strategy was the learners’ behaviour and attitude towards school. One participant stated that “their attitude is like ‘tomorrow is not school, we just want to go home’” (4:52). Another participant agreed and said that “it was like as if I was on vacation mode” (4:29). One participant explained the reason for their behaviour as follows:

... because they know they are going to be home tomorrow, sometimes their behaviour isn’t that well. It is as if they feel that tomorrow they are not coming to school, so we don’t do our best. ... So, some children, I think it really affects them; it affects their behaviour and also their conduct [attitude] to their work. (4:51)

Other behavioural issues included adhering to the social distancing regulations. One participant said: “Because it was very strange to the learners, they did not adhere to all the regulations.” (4:121) Another participant agreed and added that “they still borrowed stationery from one another, moved around in the class as before, shared laughs, etc.” (1:122) All the participants agreed that social distancing and “the lack of movement and the wearing of the masks all the time” (4:68) were a struggle. One participant elaborated that “it was really a challenge for the children, just to keep them apart; children want to run and come into close contact with one another, so that was a continuous challenge” (4:73). The wearing of masks and social distancing also led to the learners struggling with listening and communication skills. One participant explained: “I think the fact that they couldn’t see our mouths moving and we couldn’t see their mouths moving because of the masks made communication quite difficult.” (4:131) Other participants added that “you could see their little minds were working, like ‘what did you say?’” (4:135), and: “Instructions had to be repeated and slowed down in order to get to a point where everybody could actually follow what is being said.” (4:138)

Due to social distancing regulations, having to teach at home also led to four participants experiencing “home environment” (4:69) challenges. One participant explained that some home environments were “not good for learning” (4:69) and teaching.



Parents' expectations included continuing education at any cost and constant communication due to technology's role during the pandemic. One participant explained:

I was available online, I was available on WhatsApp and I was available at school, and if I was not careful, you know, one could burn yourself out just doing remedial work, and one is to remember that you've got family and you own time. (4:63)

The participants also explained that parents expected guidance and support from teachers in order to help their children. Consequently, the participants all felt increased pressure to support the parents of the learners they were teaching. One participant said:

We've been speaking a lot about parent involvement and how important it is ... parents wanted to be involved and they were trying, but it's as if they didn't know how to teach or how to support their children according to the learning barriers they have. So, they ended up calling and messaging the teacher, day in and day out, trying to figure out ... how to support their child. And when the learners came back, when schools had opened again, every single child in the classroom had regressed; so, it was a very big problem. (4:55)

All participants agreed. One participant added: "Not every parent is made to be a learning support teacher; that's why learners go to school." (4:57)

Another strategy different schools and parents used to meet the expectations of the Basic Department of Education was utilising technology and conducting online learning. However, this strategy led to other challenges, as discussed in the following category.

### 6.1.2 *Category 2: Challenges faced with technology and inequality*

Even though technology was identified as a resource and valuable tool during the pandemic, it caused various challenges for the participants (i.e., Foundation Phase teachers). Technology-related challenges included issues with "online anxiety" (4:80), "connectivity" (4:102) and a lack of resources and technological devices, which led to inequality.

One of the participants said that teaching online was "daunting" (4:79), and another explained that it was "definitely a lot of stress and anxiety" (4:80). One participant elaborated by stating: "I think a lot of teachers had a lot of stress in the sense that they had to teach online. And the reconnection issues ... things were happening in that moment and had to be solved in that moment." (4:94)

One participant stated: "I don't think any of us are really there to be online teachers; we are there for the children, we are there to interact with them face to face." (4:107) Another participant added: "So, as a pre-primary teacher, this almost seems like mission impossible. I mean, it's such a challenge to teach three-year-olds online, and we do require assistance from parents and guardians." (4:16) The use of online teaching also made all participants concerned about education inequality during the pandemic. For example, they said:

... not every child has an opportunity to sit with a laptop. (4:88)

... learners wouldn't have access to some sort of device or permanent Internet connection. (4:92)

In a lot of homes, there is only one computer or one cell phone, and there's no permanent access to the Internet. (4:96)

The participants explained that inequality regarding access to technological resources led to many schools being unable to conduct online education. This, in turn, led to many learners being disadvantaged during the pandemic. One participant elaborated:

I'm seeing the difference between how the private school learners are way ahead than most of the kids that I was teaching within a government school in Grade 2 because the private school continued studying online and [the children were] still being able to come to school, wherein [sic] government schools rotated and some learners missed out on skills. And I think that I've seen the difference in how Covid might have affected them. (4:54)

Inequality in their strategies was also visible when the participants elaborated on how difficult it was to differentiate their learning and support learners with different needs and backgrounds. One participant stated that she "found it more difficult to support them" (4:59) during the pandemic. She explained:

Because of the fact that they were all being in different homes, learning in different ways and different paces. I find it really difficult because we're not teaching one child in one specific way; we have to teach that child in a completely different way. (4:59)

### 6.1.3 Category 3: The challenge of uncertainty and fear

From the data, it was clear that all the participants struggled with the notion of uncertainty. They said that there "was a lot of uncertainty and a lot of changes" (4:120), which led to their "constantly having to wonder what's happening" (4:20). One participant elaborated on her struggle as follows:

... the challenge of uncertainty; so, on a daily basis, I'm faced with questions like "When will our regulations change? Will our holidays be affected? Will we need to change our classroom setups again, according to protocol?" This is a major one - I probably had to change my classroom setup four times this year, almost every term because every term there's a new protocol. (4:19)

Other issues regarding uncertainty included not knowing "how much parental intervention there was and how much work the parents did, but we have to go on the fact that the children have tried their best" (4:41). The issue of uncertainty was also evident when a participant elaborated on the questions she asked herself on a daily basis:

How am I going to provide support to my children? How am I going to provide support to their parents? Because, in this case, we have to look at supporting every category, whether it's a child, the parent, the educators. How is everybody going to get support? (4:87)

Furthermore, the challenges related to uncertainty led to increased levels of fear. One of the greatest challenges faced by the participants was fear: fear for their learners, their own families and their own health and safety. The participants used words like "worried" (4:8; 4:82), "anxiety" (4:78), "anxious" (4:8), "concerned" (4:72 & 4:80), "stress" (4:80), "panic" (4:86), "scared" (4:108) and "fearful" (4:115; 4:116) to express how they felt during the pandemic while they had to continue teaching.

Connections were made between the participants' fear and their understanding of hope. The idea of fear being related to the concept of hope aligns with the book of Isaiah, where the Lord says: "Fear not, for I am with you." (Isa. 43:5) The Lord, therefore, makes clear his promise to his people that no harm will come to them, that they belong to him and that they should, therefore, have no fear. The connection between fear and hope is evident in how, despite being fearful, the participants remained hopeful and continued teaching and learning by using any strategies available to them.

## 6.2 Theme 2: Defining indicators of hope

From the data analysis, it was evident that the participants had similar views regarding the concept of hope, which could not be described as being solely derived from either a secular or a Christian perspective. However, even though most participants had a similar understanding of hope, some of their beliefs regarding the source of hope differed, which provided insight into whether their understanding of hope was based on a Christian or secular view.

The participants described hope as “a positive outlook” (5:14), doing “mental gymnastics” (4:190), “an ideal” (5:20), the ability to “continuously persevere” (4:180), “being flexible” (4:26-4:28), to “embrace change” (4:26), “seeing and embracing new opportunities” (4:28), “seeing the bigger picture” (5:6) and having “resilience” (4:23; 4:24; 4:179; 4:195).

From the participants’ descriptions of hope, it is evident that they viewed hope as agency-based, which aligns with Snyder’s hope theory (Snyder, 2002; Snyder *et al.*, 1991). Hope was also understood as emotive, motivational and goal-orientated, which aligns with McCormick’s (2017) definition of hope. Moreover, one very common understanding of hope that stood out in the data was the argument that hope is a belief. The participants explained hope as follows: “... believing that something can happen” (5:9), “It’s a belief and a desire that circumstances can change” (5:11), and “Hope, for me, is about believing” (5:5), and “Hope is a desire and a belief” (5:7).

The participants’ understanding of hope as a belief is aligned with the arguments of McCormick (2017). However, one’s understanding of hope is shaped by what one believes to be the source of one’s hope. It can also be argued that viewing hope as a belief is seen from a Christian perspective. Viewing hope as a belief aligns with Oliphint and Casad (2016), who argue that hope is a belief in God and that he is the source, which means that hope is beyond human strength and personal agency. One participant said: “Hope to me means trust.” (5:1) Other participants described hope as having a “powerful spirit” (4:23), which aligns with Wormell’s (2023) definition of hope as a trust in Christ’s promises and not relying on one’s own agency, but on the strength and grace of the Holy Spirit. From a Christian perspective, God is the source of hope (Oliphint & Casad, 2016), and by believing in God, one has hope.

However, when the participants stated that hope is a belief, one participant elaborated by stating that “[h]ope is believing in your own competence that they can achieve regardless of the challenges you face; as long as you believe in yourself, you will have hope” (5:2). This quotation is in stark contrast to the Christian perspective of hope and aligns with Snyder’s hope theory, which associates hope with self-confidence and self-efficacy (Snyder *et al.*, 1991; Snyder, 2002).

When hope is viewed as believing in God and his promises, then hope is understood from a Christian perspective. In contrast, when hope is viewed as a belief in one’s own agency and abilities, then hope is understood from a secular perspective. Therefore, in exploring teachers’ understanding of hope, it is necessary to delve into their beliefs regarding the source of their hope.

## 6.3 Theme 3: Sources of hope

As indicated in Theme 2, the concept of hope was found to be universal across all our participants. However, their source of hope stood out the most from the data, especially when explored from both a Christian and secular perspective. In explanation of the previous statement, it can be said that community support was found to be one of the most significant sources of hope, as well as their agency and pathways thinking that were faith-based and purpose-driven. Moreover, it was also found that collaborative conversations as a research methodology also served as a source of hope.

### 6.3.1 *Category 1: Community support as a source of hope (parents, schools, colleagues and university)*

From the findings, it was clear that the community support the participants received served as one of their sources of hope. This was evident when the participants described how “collaboration” (4:28) and “forming stronger relationships with your co-workers and your children” (5:3) helped them remain hopeful during the pandemic. One participant explained that “in a period of social isolation and lockdown, such a strong network of support was reacted; so yeah, I found that quite ironic, but also, I enjoyed that collaboration between my parents, my guardians and my students” (4:18). Another participant explained that their collaboration and established support systems made them realise that they “were equally confused and equally struggling” (4:65), which “made them feel less alone and more supported and hopeful” (4:67). One participant explained:

[You must] be like a tree and blossom where you are planted because this storm will pass, and as long as we are rooted with each other, we can stand together. I am excited to see what will happen in the future. (4:164)

Accordingly, the argument is made that collaboration, a sense of community and support systems create a hopeful mindset that results in pathways thinking. Hence, the idea of “You are not alone” increases teachers’ level of hope

### 6.3.2 *Category 2: Agency and pathways as part of hope*

Based on Snyder’s hope theory, pathways and agency are key components of hope. The findings in our data aligned with Rand and Cheavens’ (2009) argument that agency is used to create useful pathways for reaching goals. The data showed that the participants’ agency motivated them to find pathways (i.e., strategies) to support learners and continue education despite the cumbersome challenges (as discussed in Theme 1) they experienced. One of the participants said she “just had to deal with it” (4:14), and another participant remarked: “We made it work.” (4:32) One participant quoted Jeffrey Benjamin: “In every challenge lives a greater opportunity’, and this is something I resonate with.” (4:25) Throughout the collaborative discussions, all the participants passionately elaborated on how they were using their agency to strategise and implement their pathways (i.e., strategies). One of the participants explained that she was hopeful because she had a “positive outlook on a situation ... there are always ways that we can implement certain strategies” (5:14).

For some, pathways in dealing with the challenges included daily or weekly learner rotation; for others, it meant online teaching. One participant explained that there were “different ways of structuring the learning opportunities” (4:66). Other quotations that demonstrate how the participants used their agency to develop pathways to achieve their goals are as follows: “I told myself I’m going to take all that necessary precaution ... and I did that.” (4:8) “Do not give up hope. Life is about choices. You chose to be an educator; make the best of it regardless of the situation.” (4:181)

The following quotation exemplifies how some schools and teachers creatively used their agency to find pathways against all odds. In this participant’s case, face-to-face teaching was not an option, and a lack of technological resources was also a problem.

We used Google Drive as a platform. We filmed and uploaded videos and documents ... and then it [sic] was made available to our students. ... we allowed parents to use our school Wi-Fi – that’s setting up at the parking lot Wi-Fi download zone – and they would drive in and download the lessons or the documents of the day and then go home and the children would do them. And we had the work e-mailed to us by the children through an e-mail system that we set up with them. (4:93)

A similar example of agency was when one participant explained that, as in the previous example, using technology was not an option due to a lack of technological devices. Instead, they “allowed parents to come through the drop-off zone and pick up work packs or drop work packs off, and they would take that home to the child, and we would then be able to mark those at school” (4:97).

The above quotations support the argument by White *et al.* (2021, p. 55) that the COVID-19 pandemic was a trying time for teachers, with its many problem-solving situations and opportunities and where teachers were required to be “visionaries”. These quotations also show how these participants became agents of change, as Bourn (2016) and Van der Heijden (2015) described.

Dealing with challenges using agency and viewing them as opportunities to find pathways are indicators of hope within the data. One participant highlighted the importance of remaining hopeful by saying: “I think that it’s very vital that teachers are hopeful because they have to face so many challenges, and it is really difficult to keep going without hope.” (5:19)

Another quotation that stood out in the data was a metaphor one of the participants used to describe teachers’ agency and the pathways they created during difficult circumstances:

I went walking, and I came across a couple of peach trees, which have [sic] these beautiful blossoms, and I was just blown away by the feeling of hope. We have been like trees, stripped of our leaves during the third wave of the pandemic. We were barren ... We were dry, we were stripped of so many resources, stripped of so many opportunities and yet, just like this peach tree, managed to be resilient and grow new flowers. (4:163)

### 6.3.3 Category 3: Faith-based, purpose-driven pathways thinking

When investigating the teachers’ different pathways thinking, it became clear that it was often based on faith, that is, faith in God or “trusting in the little things that you are doing in your classroom, in your little corner” (5:13). Most participants did not explicitly state that their faith was in God. However, they made it clear that the concept of faith played a role in their pathways thinking by elaborating on their “calling”. One participant said this calling was “a life-changing occupation” (4:202). Another participant explained that teachers’ calling gave them purpose and, in essence, provided them with hope. She said:

Because they can see that, even though they are overwhelmed and the resources are not there and they are struggling, there is one person, one child, that they are touching and impacting ... (5:13)

Another participant explained that having faith and hope was “about seeing the bigger picture ... if a learner is struggling, I actually see that they can get to their fullest potential and achieve more; that’s me as a teacher having hope” (5:6).

Similarly, another participant elaborated:

I feel that being hopeful is to always have a positive outlook on a situation. Even though we might feel hopeless at times, there’s [sic] always ways that we can implement certain strategies. ... as teachers, have been called into this profession; so, we all have a little bit of a spark that allows us to be that hopeful person even to a hopeless child. (5:14)

Based on these and similar quotations, the argument can be made that the participants’ pathways thinking was faith-based and purpose-driven. The argument behind their

pathways thinking being faith-based is rooted in how they defined hope as a belief and their indicators of hope being associated with their faith (see Theme 2). Their purpose is rooted in their faith, as their faith acted as a motivator to pursue their purpose, that is, their calling (i.e., teaching) even while facing difficult circumstances (e.g., COVID-19).

### 6.3.4 *Category 4: Collaborative conversations methodology as a source of hope*

The data found that the research methodology of collaborative discussions served as a source of hope for the participants. These discussions provided insightful information about how the methodology not only acts as a data collection measure but also plays a valuable role within a study. Conversations have been noted as a valuable research methodology since it allows participants to collaborate and build on one another's insights and experiences (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). The same was found in the data of this study. Here are examples of what the participants said in this regard:

It's so nice to be able to talk to everyone and just, you know, communicate the shared struggles we've all experienced during this time. (3:10)

I think Covid hit us all quite in different ways ... I'm looking forward to hearing about everyone's circumstances and sharing about mine. (4:11)

We work as a team; we meet very often and we share ideas. (4:60)

... the support that we are giving ... makes a dream work. (4:61)

... the collaboration that we experienced definitely helped. (4:197)

One participant explained that the collaborative conversations gave her hope because they

... inspire each other with the truth about teaching during a pandemic but also to give each other hope as to what has worked for you and what have you learnt in [sic] previous occasions that you can share with colleagues and help them to understand what the situation entails. (4:12)

From the above quotations, it is also evident that hope can be shared among teachers – the hope that we can learn together, learn from one another, be curious and even impatient together, produce something together and collectively resist the obstacles that prevent teachers from being hopeful (Jacobs, 2005).

One participant elaborated:

... support to the teachers is very important. ... we are all in this big muddy puddle trying to swim, with little alligators biting out toes, and we had to try and survive and we needed support ... which we were fortunate enough we did get during these discussions. (4:64)

To conclude, one participant: "If we are ever faced with an emergency situation, we can refer back to the information that we've gathered here." (4:71) This remark shows the value of collaborative conversations as a research methodology.

## 7. Conclusion

This study explored the concept of hope within education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Contemplating the concept of hope required careful investigation into how teachers interpreted and experienced hope in a time plagued with uncertainty and

cumbersome challenges. These challenges included the expectations of various educational stakeholders, technological difficulties and the inequality associated with the digital divide.

It became clear that although teachers faced challenges brought about by the pandemic, hope continued to fuel many teachers' agency in finding possible solutions. A key source of hope that served as a vehicle to rekindle teachers' hope was their communities (i.e., parents, schools, colleagues and universities). The support, encouragement and sense of belonging fostered within their communities of practice served as beacons of hope for the teachers. A community of practice creates an opportunity for teachers to share ideas and lived experiences, which (in turn) generates and sustains hope. The collaborative conversation methodology used in this study also served as a source of hope. The value of collaborative conversations lies within the notion that individual teachers are not stranded and isolated on a metaphorical island. Instead, when people face the same challenges within a community, they are inclined to be more hopeful.

The teachers' understanding of hope in the study could not be described as being solely from either a secular or a Christian perspective.

However, even though most participants had a similar understanding of hope, some participants' beliefs regarding the source of hope differed. This provided insight into whether their understanding of hope was based on secular or Christian views. Therefore, we conclude that the invisible force of hope, whether agency-based or faith-based, is central to teacher agency. Hence, the term "faith-based, purpose-driven hope" emerged from the data. Despite the adversity the teachers faced, they were driven by hope, which propelled them to generate an urgency and an agency to continue teaching and bring about positive change in the educational sector. Consequently, this research shows that hope can contribute to teachers' role as agents of change.

In the new post-COVID-19 era, teachers' hope should be a key consideration when aiming to improve the education system. Teachers need hope to reinforce their own agency in their classroom practices. Stakeholders in education (i.e., the Department of Basic Education, universities, school governing bodies and school management teams) need to be cognisant of the importance of hope and find ways to nourish and rekindle teachers' hope. Furthermore, this study's research methodology, namely collaborative conversations, can serve as a valuable methodology for future studies that aim to establish communities of practice.

## References

- AGNOLETTI, R., & QUEIROZ, V. (2020). COVID-19 and the challenges in education. *Centro de Estudos Sociedade e Tecnologia*, 5(2), 1-2.
- ALAM, A. (2020). Challenges and possibilities of online education during COVID-19. *Preprints.org*. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202006.0013.v1>.
- ALEA, L.A., FABREA, M.F., ROLDAN, R.D.A., & FAROOQI, A.Z. (2020). Teachers' COVID-19 awareness, distance learning education experiences and perceptions towards institutional readiness and challenges. *International journal of learning, teaching and educational research*, 19(6), 127-144. <https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.19.6.8>.
- ALEXANDER, T.D., & ROSNER, B.S. (2000). *New dictionary of Biblical theology*. Intervarsity Press.
- BIBLE. 2016. *English standard version*. Crossway.
- BLOESER, C., & STAHL, T. (2022). Hope: *The Stanford encyclopedia of philosophy*. <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2022/entries/hope/>.
- BOURN, D. (2016). Teachers as agents of social change. *International journal of development education and global learning*, 7(3), 63-77.

- CHANG, E.C., CHANG, O.D., MARTOS, T., SALLAY, V., ZETTLER, I., STECA, P., D'ADDARIO, M., BONIWELL, I., POP, A., TARRAGONA, M., SLEMP, G.R., SHIN, J., DE LA FUENTE, A., & CARDEÑOSO, O. (2018). The positive role of hope on the relationship between loneliness and unhappy conditions in Hungarian young adults: How pathways thinking matters! *The journal of positive psychology*, 14(6), 1-10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2018.1545042>.
- CHISANGO, G., & MARONGWE, N. (2021). The digital divide at three disadvantaged secondary schools in Gauteng, South Africa. *Journal of education*, 82, 149-165. <https://doi.org/10.17159/2520-9868/i82a09>.
- COCHRAN-SMITH, M., & LYTLER, S.L. (Eds.) (1993). *Inside/outside: Teacher research and knowledge*. Teachers College Press.
- COLLA, R., WILLIAMS, P., OADES, L.G., & CAMACHO-MORLES, J. (2022). "A new hope" for positive psychology: A dynamic systems reconceptualization of hope theory. *Frontiers in psychology*, 13, 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.809053>.
- DAMÇA, C., LANGFORD, M., UEHARA, D., & SCHERER, R. (2021). Teachers' agency and online education in times of crisis. *Computers in human behavior*, 121, 106793. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2021.106793>.
- DANIEL, S.J. (2020). Education and the COVID-19 pandemic. *Prospects*, 49(1), 91-96.
- DAY, J.P. (1969). Hope. *American philosophical quarterly*, 6(2), 89-102.
- DUFAULT, K., & MARTOCCHIO, B.C. (1985). Hope: Its spheres and dimensions. *Nursing clinics of North America*, 20(2), 379-391. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0029-6465\(22\)00328-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0029-6465(22)00328-0).
- FELDMAN, A. (1999). The role of conversation in collaborative action research. *Educational action research*, 7(1), 125-147. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09650799900200076>.
- FELDMAN, D.B., & DREHER, D.E. (2012). Can hope be changed in 90 minutes? Testing the efficacy of a single-session goal-pursuit intervention for college students. *Journal of happiness studies*, 13, 745-59. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-011-9292-4>.
- FELDMAN, D.B., RAND, K.L., & KAHLE-WROBLESKI, K. (2009). Hope and goal attainment: Testing a brief basic prediction of hope theory. *Journal of social clinical psychology*, 28, 479-497. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2009.28.4.479>.
- FOWLER, S. (2022). The power of hope. *Nursing made incredibly easy!* 20(4), 28-32. <https://doi.org/10.1097/01.nme.0000824580.80011.99>.
- GRAVLEE, G.S. (2000). Aristotle on hope. *Journal of the history of philosophy*, 38(4), 461-477. <https://doi.org/10.1353/hph.2005.0029>.
- HANSON, K. (2009). *What exactly is hope and how can you measure it?* Retrieved Feb. 10, 2023, from <http://positivepsychology.org.uk/hope-theory-snyder-adult-scale/>
- HASSELL, L.A., PETERSON, J., & PANTANOWITZ, L. (2021). Pushed across the digital divide: COVID-19 accelerated pathology training onto a new digital learning curve. *Academic pathology*, 8, 2374289521994240. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2374289521994240>.
- IMANTS, J., & VAN DER WAL, M.M. (2020). A model of teacher agency in professional development and school reform. *Journal of curriculum studies*, 52(1), 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2019.1604809>.
- JACOBS, D. (2005). What's hope got to do with it? Towards a theory of hope and pedagogy. *JAC*, 25(4), 783-802.
- LOPEZ, S.J. (2010). Making ripples: How principals and teachers can spread hope throughout our schools. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 92(2), 41-44. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003172171009200210>.
- LOPEZ, S.J., CIARLELLI, R., COFFMAN, L., STONE, M., & WYATT, L. (2000). Diagnosing for strengths: On measuring hope building blocks. In C.R. Snyder (Ed.), *Handbook of hope theory, measures and applications* (pp. 57-85). Academic Press. <https://doi.org/10.1016/b978-012654050-5/50006-3>.
- MCCORMICK, M.S. (2017). Rational hope. *Philosophical explorations*, 20(1), 127-141.
- MCDERMOTT, R.C., CHENG, H.L., WONG, J., BOOTH, N., JONES, Z., & SEVIG, T. (2017). Hope for help-seeking: A positive psychology perspective of psychological help-seeking intentions. *The counseling psychologist*, 45(2), 237-265. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000017693398>.
- MOSLEY, D.V., NEVILLE, H.A., CHAVEZ-DUEÑAS, N.Y., ADAMES, H.Y., LEWIS, J.A., & FRENCH, B.H. (2020). Radical hope in revolting times: Proposing a culturally relevant psychological framework. *Social and personality psychology compass*, 14(1), e12512. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12512>.



- NEUWIRTH, L.S., JOVIĆ, S., & MUKHERJI, B.R. (2021). Reimagining higher education during and post-COVID-19: Challenges and opportunities. *Journal of adult and continuing education*, 27(2), 141-156. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1477971420947738>.
- OLIPHINT, C., & CASAD, M.B. (2016). *Citizens of hope: Basics of Christian identity*. Nashville: Abingdon Press.
- OSS, D.A. (1992). A note on Paul's use of Isaiah. *Bulletin for Biblical research*, 2(1), 105-112. <https://doi.org/10.5325/bullbiblrese.2.1.0105>.
- POKHREL, S., & CHHETRI, R. (2021). A literature review on impact of COVID-19 pandemic on teaching and learning. *Higher education for the future*, 8(1), 133-141. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2347631120983481>.
- RAND, K.L., & CHEAVENS, S. (2009). Hope theory. In C.R. Snyder, & S.J. Lopez (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of positive psychology* (pp. 323-334). Oxford Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195187243.013.0030>.
- RAZKANE, H., SAYEH, A.Y., & YEOU, M. (2021). University teachers' attitudes towards distance learning during COVID-19 pandemic: Hurdles, challenges, and take-away lessons. *European journal of interactive multimedia and education*, 3(1), e02201. <https://doi.org/10.30935/ejimed/11436>.
- SAVAHL, S. (2020). Children's hope in South Africa: A population-based study. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 1023.
- SCIOLI, A., RICCI, M., NYUGEN, T., & SCIOLI, E.R. (2011). Hope: Its nature and measurement. *Psychology of religion and spirituality*, 3(2), 78-97. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0020903>.
- SELIGMAN, M. (2002). *Authentic happiness*. Free Press.
- SNYDER, C.R. (1994). *The psychology of hope: You can get there from here*. American Psychological Association.
- SNYDER, C.R. (2002). Hope theory: Rainbows in the mind. *Psychological inquiry*, 13(4), 249-275. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1304\\_01](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327965pli1304_01).
- SNYDER, C.R. (2005). Teaching: The lessons of hope. *Journal of social and clinical psychology*, 24(1), 72-84.
- SNYDER, C.R., HARRIS, C., ANDERSON, J.R., HOLLERAN, S.A., IRVING, L.M., SIGMON, S.T., YOSHINOBU, L., GIBB, J., LANGELLE, C., & HARNEY, P. (1991). The will and the ways: Development and validation of an individual-differences measure of hope. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 60(4), 570-585. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.60.4.570>.
- SNYDER, C.R., LOPEZ, S.J., SHOREY, H.S., RAND, K.L., & FELDMAN, D.B. (2003). Hope theory, measurements, and applications to school psychology. *School psychology quarterly*, 18(2), 122-139. <https://doi.org/10.1521/scpq.18.2.122.21854>.
- VAN DER HEIJDEN, H.R.M.A., GELDENS, J.J., BEIJAARD, D., & POPEIJUS, H.L. (2015). Characteristics of teachers as change agents. *Teachers and teaching*, 21(6), 681-699. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2015.1044328>.
- WEBB, D. (2010). Paulo Freire and "the need for a kind of education in hope". *Cambridge journal of education*, 40(4), 327-339. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764x.2010.526591>.
- WHITE, J., JOHNSON, P., & GOOS, M. (2021). Pre-service teachers as agents of change in the mathematics classroom: A case study. *Mathematics teacher education and development*, 23(1), 54-73.
- WORGAN, T. (2013). Hope theory in coaching: How clients respond to interventions based on Snyder's theory of hope. *International journal of evidence based coaching & mentoring*, 7, 100-114.
- WORMELL, E. (2023). *What is Christian hope?* Retrieved March 20, 2023, from <https://corechristianity.com/resource-library/articles/what-is-christian-hope/>

## Author Contributions

Dr Swanepoel served as the research project coordinator and is therefore the corresponding author. Dr Swanepoel and Dr West contributed equally to the conceptualisations and writing of the paper. Their roles were distributed as follows: Dr Swanepoel led the data collection processes and procedures whereas Dr West took lead with the data analysis.