Hope and its Applications: A Scoping Review

Associate Professor Elaine Khoo, Dr Alice Beban, Dr Clare Mouat, and Kymberley Kennedy
Massey University, New Zealand

Abstract

Despite a growing recognition and empirical base on hope and its value in educational contexts, there has been limited research into hope and hope-related strategies for transforming higher education (HE) teaching and learning practices. We report on a scoping review to uncover current perspectives of hope as contemplated and applied in contemporary HE teaching-learning contexts. Our study draws from six databases (A+ Education, ERIC, Education Source, Education Research Complete, PsychINFO, and Scopus) and thematically analysed 16 studies across the last decade to understand their context, theoretical framing, and practice-based orientations. Our findings highlight the range, use and value of research into hope expressed as a multidimensional construct and variously understood through individual, sociocultural, and critical perspectives. While many studies adopt an individual view of hope as a measurable trait linked to student wellbeing and academic success, others emphasise relational, collective, and community-based approaches, or frame hope as a transformative, collective force for social and political change. Each perspective engendered associated hope-based practices ranging from goal setting, mindfulness training, dialogic and caring relationships with educators and students to cultivating possible education futures and justice-oriented teaching. We argue that this diversity reflects both the richness and the generative tensions that are thinly understood within current hope scholarship. Our findings contribute to the interdisciplinary, institutional planning and development of hope-based curricula and approaches and have implications for HE practices and the scholarship of hope.

Practitioner Notes

1. Fostering students' hopeful dispositions and actions supports learning, wellbeing, and future-oriented engagement.
2. Examining hope and its generative applications supports HE educators to develop intentional and contextual practices to prepare students for life and lifeworld challenges.
3. Our findings enable educators to identify and expand their understanding of hope as existing along a continuum of individual, sociocultural and critical/transformative orientations.
4. Each orientation offers a distinct set of hope-based practices which educators can draw from to nurture hopeful teaching and learning environments relevant to student development, institutional purpose, and broader societal needs.

Keywords

Hope, hope-based practices, pedagogy, higher education, student wellbeing

Introduction

In recent years, there has been growing recognition of the emotional and psychological challenges faced by educators and students in higher education. We witness compounding geopolitical crises converging with planetary and localised crises. These include heightened and differentiated awareness of the climate crisis, rising authoritarianism, trade wars, financial precarity, rising mental health issues, cost of living crises, and ongoing long-term disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns. These polycrises contribute to a context in which anxiety, overwhelm, and despair are widespread among learners (Neves & Brown, 2022; Verlie et al., 2021; Williams & Grain, 2025). These challenges are personal, structural, and cultural shaped by shifting geopolitical, social, and ecological conditions that affect students' capacity to learn, connect, and imagine viable futures. We recognise the diversity of and disruptions to corporatising learning environments such that Higher Education (HE) institutions and academic communities of practice must reinforce their vital roles of critic and conscience of society in evermore constrained conditions (Nagy & Burch, 2009; Webb, 2025). Against this backdrop, educators in HE are increasingly seeking new ways to support students to engage, learn, and develop the capacity to flourish in uncertain times.

One promising response emerging in the HE literature is the turn towards hope-based approaches. The term *pedagogy of hope* is most widely associated with the work of Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, whose seminal book "Pedagogy of Hope" (1994) views education as a practice of freedom and political transformation. Building on Freire, scholars such as hooks (2003), Giroux (2003) and others (Bourn, 2025; Lopez, 2023; Webb, 2025; Williams & Grain, 2025; Zembylas, 2017) have further expanded the notion of hope-infused pedagogy as one rooted in ethical responsibility and resistance to injustice. In parallel, work on hopeful pedagogies has gained traction in more recent educational research (e.g., Abegglen et al., 2025), particularly in psychological and applied learning contexts concerned with student wellbeing, success, and institutional belonging (O'Malley, 2009).

Recent scholarship highlights hope as a crucial yet underexplored dimension of teaching and learning. A growing body of diverse research demonstrates that hope can play a vital role in enhancing student outcomes, including motivation, engagement, wellbeing, academic achievement, and retention (Barry et al., 2019; Jones et al., 2024; Suominen et al., 2025). Drawing on traditions of critical pedagogy, scholars emphasise the need to cultivate forms of hope that are relational and grounded in students' lived realities (Grande & Staton, 2025; Gilbert, 2021; Schwittay, 2023; Zembylas, 2017). As Freire (1994) argued, hope is "an ontological necessity", but it must be "rooted in practice" rather than remaining naïve or passive.

Despite this growing recognition, hope remains inconsistently defined and applied in HE scholarship and practice. Across the literature, hope is conceptualised in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways. However, there has been little synthesis of how these perspectives are being conceptualised and enacted across educational contexts. This suggests a need to map the conceptual terrain of hope and to explore the tensions, synergies, and gaps between its various interpretations and applications.

This article presents a scoping review that addresses this gap. Our aim is to examine how hope is conceptualised and applied in HE teaching and learning, drawing on international literature

published over the past decade. This aim is translated into our research question: *How has hope been contemplated and applied in higher education?*

Our review spans a range of disciplines and methodologies and reflects the insights of an interdisciplinary research team based across multi-campus in a [COUNTRY NAME] university, working in Sociology, Education, Geography and Planning. Each of us engages with hope in our own pedagogical, scholarly, and professional practices. In our work, we have become increasingly aware of the lack of theoretical and practical guidance available for educators seeking to do this work, particularly in the face of institutional austerity, and increasing student wellbeing and graduate needs. Our goal is not to offer a singular definition or ideal model of hope, but to map the diverse ways educators are grappling with its meaning and practice across HE contexts, and to explore how this might support and strengthen our teaching practice.

Our interest in this review extends from documenting existing hope-based practices to asking what becomes possible when we name and reflect on the hopeful work educators are already doing (often quietly, often under pressure and in silos). In doing so, our study contributes to critical conversations about the role of hope in HE, not only as an active response to crises, but as a dynamic and generative force for shaping curriculum, pedagogical practice, and policy within HE.

Methodology

As part of an ongoing research agenda into the mobilisation of hope in HE, we conducted a research synthesis to map the current peer-reviewed international scholarship on how hope has been contemplated and applied in HE settings. A scoping review was appropriate as a robust and systematic means for identifying, analysing, and detailing the key concepts, theoretical frameworks, and sources that inform our scholarly focus (Arksey & O'Malley, 2005; Peters et al., 2015; Tricco et at., 2018). Contemporary best practice in scoping reviews distinguishes them from alternative knowledge synthesis approaches (especially systematic literature reviews); emphasises the close aligning of the scoping review with research objectives and methodologies to enable the reporting of current and potential research agendas (Gutierrez-Bucheli et. al., 2022; Munn et al., 2018; Peters, 2015, 2020; Tricco et al., 2018). Particularly, a limited but probing scoping review has efficacy for identifying "areas where evidence is lacking", facilitating dialogue for communities of academic practice in contemporary higher education, assuring funders and higher education institutions of the value of future research by identifying the emergence of hope in higher educational contexts as one of the "questions of greatest need" (Chang, 2018; p. 503). A scoping review serves as an orienting and focussing study (Peters et al., 2015, 2020) and was appropriate for our transdisciplinary research collaboration to progress our research aim in theoretical and practical ways.

Scoping review protocol

We present our scoping review protocol in line with standard reporting best practice (Page et al., 2021; Peters et al., 2015; 2020). Our four-step process scoping review process was guided by the updated PRISMA guidelines (Page et al., 2021; Tricco et al., 2018):

1. Identification of search terms.
2. Screening for relevant articles.
3. Eligibility for selection.

4. Inclusion of eligible studies for analysis.

Step 1: Identification of Search Terms

We developed a search protocol by identifying a set of initial keywords derived from our research aim and questions. We combined these keywords into a comprehensive search string using Boolean operators (AND, OR) (see Table 1) after consultation with a university librarian (Gutierrez-Bucheli et al., 2022). Combinations of search strings were applied in the following six common and highly valued databases: A+ Education, ERIC, Education Source, Education Research Complete, PsychINFO, and Scopus. The following search parameters were applied directly through the databases or applied through screening processes, as relevant: peer-reviewed books and journal articles in English published between 2014 to 2024. We deliberately chose this wider year range to include articles prior to the COVID-19 pandemic to gain insights into how the contemplation and application of hope may have changed over time and through a significant global event.

Table 1

Keyword Search and Potential Combinations of Search Strings

Boolean operators	Population of Interest	Context	Concepts		
⇧	Educators	Higher education	"hope"	perception*	practice*
OR	Teachers	Universit*		conceptuali?ation*	
⇩	Instructors	College*		perceive*	
	Faculty	Post-secondary			
	Learners	Postsecondary			
	Students	Tertiary			
	⇦ **AND** ⇨				

Note. The use of the '*' truncation enabled different expressions to be searched (e.g., 'universit*' will yield 'university', 'universities'). The use of the '?' wildcard enabled different spelling to be searched (e.g., 'conceptuali?ation' will yield 'conceptualisation', and 'conceptualization').

Step 2: Screening for Relevant Articles

We used EndNote (a Bibliographic manager) to collate the sources for the project. Figure 1 indicates 1,232 potential sources for initial inclusion in the first phase of our screening process. The initial screening stage was conducted following the guidelines of Gutierrez-Bucheli et al. (2022). Each database and associated records were initially screened based on the title, abstract, and keywords (where relevant), consistent with the PCC format (Population, Context, and Concept) of our research focus. Duplicates and irrelevant sources were removed, resulting in 830 possible sources. Each of these were screened by the third author by reviewing the title and abstract to determine if an article met our inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2). The criteria considered the population studied, context of a study, concepts applied, study design, and outcomes.
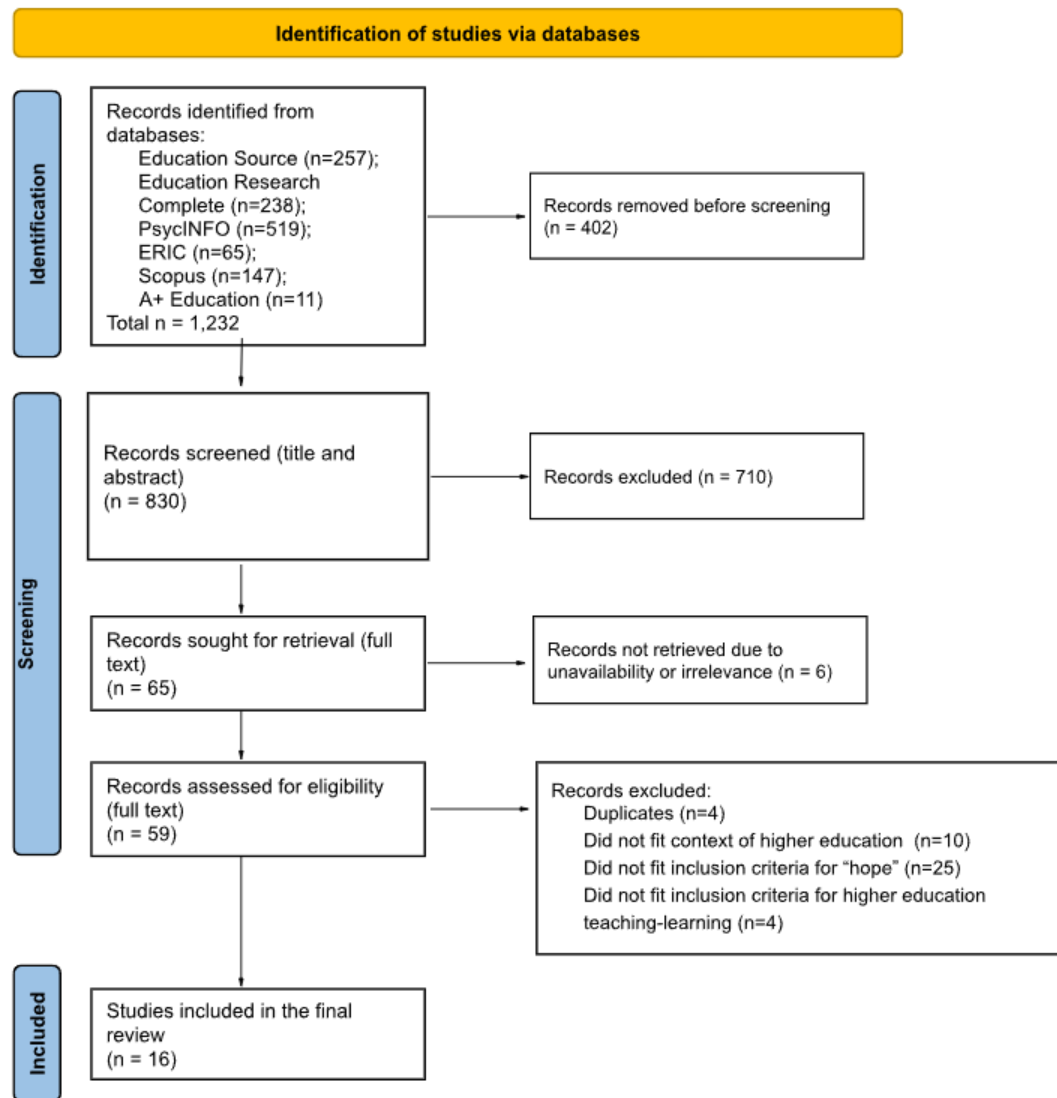
Table 2

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria for Eligibility Selection of Articles

	Included	**Excluded**
Participant	Teachers Educators Instructors Faculty Lecturer Learners Students	Mental health medical personnel Non-education context participants
Context	Higher Education University College Post-secondary Tertiary Public four-year institution Formal Pedagogy	Informal learning Non-formal learning Professional learning No reference to teaching and learning or implications for HE
Concept	Hope Contemplated Perception, Conceptualisation Practice/applied	
Study design	Primary studies	Grey literature (e.g., magazines, letters, essays, thesis)
Outcome	Studies reporting on perspectives on hope and or its application in HE	Superficial use of the term 'hope' (e.g., we hope that...)

Inter-rater reliability checks were conducted with the wider research team through a random sampling of 50 sources (Gutierrez-Bucheli et al., 2022) prior to proceeding with the second stage of eligibility screening with the remaining 65 sources.

Figure 1

PRISMA Overview of the Scoping Review Process (adapted from Page et al., 2021)

Identification of studies via databases

Identification

Records identified from databases:
    Education Source (n=257);
    Education Research Complete (n=238);
    PsycINFO (n=519);
    ERIC (n=65);
    Scopus (n=147);
    A+ Education (n=11)
Total n = 1,232

Records removed before screening (n = 402)

Screening

Records screened (title and abstract) (n = 830)

Records excluded (n = 710)

Records sought for retrieval (full text) (n = 65)

Records not retrieved due to unavailability or irrelevance (n = 6)

Records assessed for eligibility (full text) (n = 59)

Records excluded:
    Duplicates (n=4)
    Did not fit context of higher education (n=10)
    Did not fit inclusion criteria for "hope" (n=25)
    Did not fit inclusion criteria for higher education teaching-learning (n=4)

Included

Studies included in the final review (n = 16)

Step 3: Eligibility for Selection

The eligibility screening stage involved retrieving the full text of all 65 sources. Further removal of records that were either unavailable or irrelevant resulted in 59 articles of the full screening stage. Applying our inclusion and exclusion criteria (see Table 2) resulted in the removal of a further 43 records (due to duplicates, or lack of adherence to the context or concept of interest) (see Figure 1). Further inter-rater reliability checks with the wider research team confirmed the findings from the process resulting in 16 final sources (see Appendix 2 for the full list of references).

Step 4: Inclusion and analysis

A close reading of the 16 full text sources ensued. We developed a structural coding sheet in a shared spreadsheet to extract key features of each article fit for PRISMA analysis. These included

the authors; year; study questions/aim; theoretical framing; countries; study design; key findings, views of hope and how hopeful practices are enacted (see Appendix 3). We used inductive thematic analysis to identify, organise and summarise the features within and across all 16 studies (Braun & Clark, 2019). Conceptual and thematic coding was completed by all four authors with each study read and coded by at least two authors who contributed to and confirmed codes. Disagreements were resolved through discussions.

To address our research question, we coded each study based on how it conceptualised hope, specifically its underlying theoretical influences (contemplations of hope), and the nature of the practices it proposed for realising hope in action (applications of hope). Given that several studies recommended a broad range of hopeful strategies, it was not always possible to assign them to a single theme. Consequently, some studies were coded across multiple themes. These thematic categories are not mutually exclusive but represent different entry points for understanding how hope is cultivated and applied in HE.

Additionally, we sought to visually represent the varying conceptions of hope by identifying keywords within each article that broadly characterised its framing of hope. To validate this analysis, we compiled a list of the top 30 hope-related keywords using Scopus by conducting a keyword search for "hope AND higher education" and extracting the most frequently occurring keywords and indexed terms (see Appendix 1). Using NVivo, we then conducted a content analysis across our 16 articles to examine the frequency of these keywords across the studies, grouped according to our thematic categories. The resulting data were visualised into word clouds to highlight dominant characterisations of hope as articulated across the literature (see Figures 4 to 7).

The 16 studies are listed in Appendix 2 and categorised according to author, year, country, study aims, research design and population of interest (see Appendix 3).

Findings

We first report on an overview of the 16 studies followed by themes emerging from the analysis to address our research question.

Overview of the Studies

Figure 2 illustrates the distribution of the 16 final studies. In comparison to other countries, the United States of America (USA) produced the most publications (n=6) followed by the United Kingdom (n=2) with single studies published from Turkiye, Australia, Spain, India, Afghanistan, Chile, Iran, and Sweden.
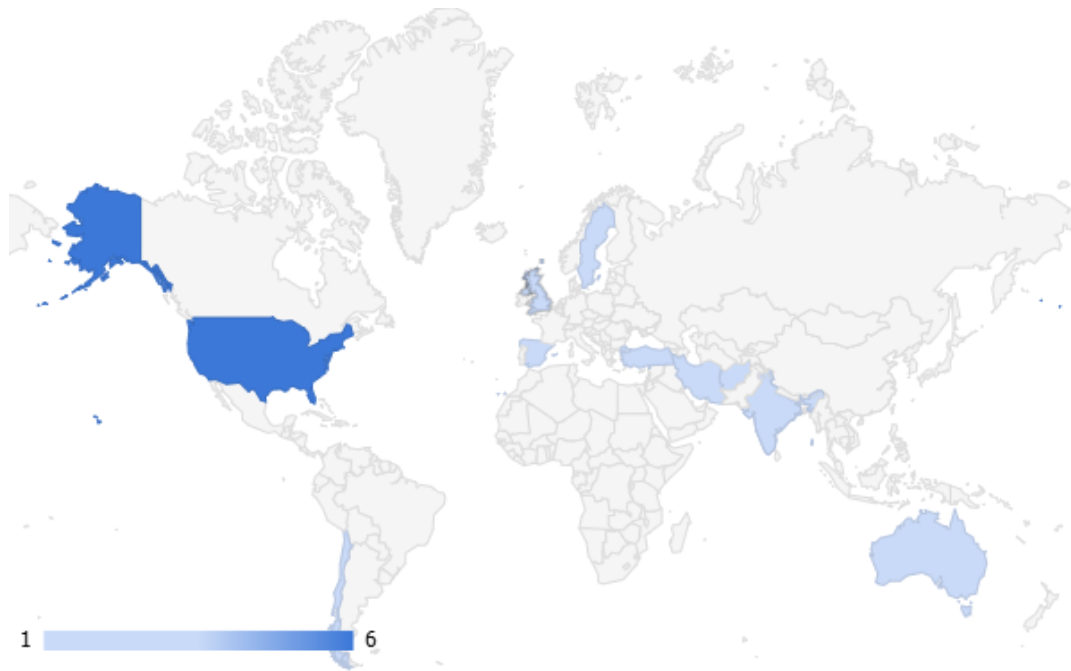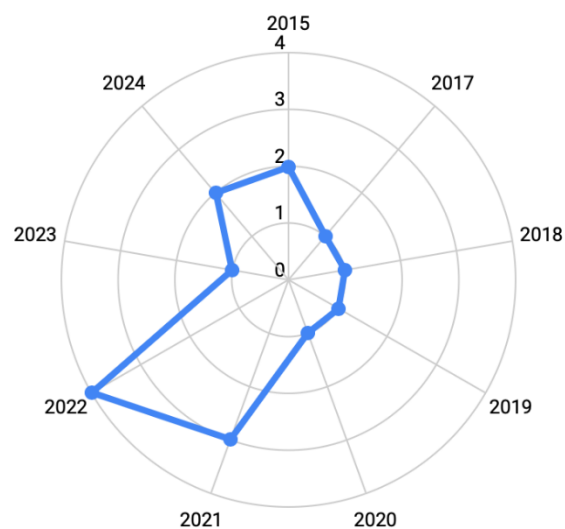
Figure 2

Distribution of Studies per Country

Figure 3 breaks down the16 studies published between 2014 and 2024 with most studies published in 2022 (n=4), followed by 2021 (n=3).

Figure 3

Distribution of Studies by Publication Year

Quantitative studies predominated in terms of methodologies adopted for hope investigations (n=7) followed by qualitative (n=5) and conceptual / thought papers (n=3). Only one study adopted a mixed-methods approach to examining hope (see Appendix 3). Relatedly, the quantitative studies tend to be underpinned by individual psychology and cognitive-based approaches linking hope to quantifiable traits that can be measured as indicators of wellbeing and academic success (e.g., Allaire, 2022).

Investigations into how hope has been contemplated and applied in Higher Education

A key interest for our research team was understanding the extent the analysed studies highlight the tensions, synergies, and gaps between the various interpretations of hope and applications of hope across diverse HE contexts. Our analysis of the 16 final articles revealed hope in HE to be a multidimensional concept, interpreted and realised in diverse ways depending on context, disciplinary framing, and research orientation. Three key categories of hope contemplations became evident, each engendering a particular orientation and corpus of associated hope-based practices: individual, sociocultural, and critical/transformative perspectives (see Table 3 for the summary and Appendix 4 for further details).

Table 3

Summary Contemplations of Hope according to Individual, Sociocultural and Critical/Transformative Perspectives and their Applications

Author(s) & Year	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation of Hope	Hope-based Practices
Individual Orientation			
Barry et al. (2019)	Psychological capital (Luthans et al.).	Individual psychological resource.	Mindfulness programme to reduce stress and promote wellbeing.
Bartos et al. (2023)	Positive psychology (Peterson).	Positive individual trait that enables coping and wellbeing.	Holistic education including emotional and spiritual wellbeing. Mindfulness and emotional intelligence programme.
Basar Gencer et al. (2024)	Psychoeducation (Snyder's Dispositional Hope Scale).	Individual's ability to set and achieve goals.	Positive counselling, career planning, sense of belonging, goal setting.
Catling et al. (2022)	Positive psychology (Snyder Adult Hope Scale).	Individual psychological trait; predictor of mental health.	Resilience-building strategies; CBT, mindfulness, and problem-solving.
Jones et al. (2024)	Snyder Future Scale (Self-efficacy; Professional Identity).	Goal-directed thinking and motivation.	Encourage innovation and problem-solving with institutional support.

Individual–Sociocultural Orientation

Allaire (2022)	Positive/Negative emotions (Pekrun).	Positive emotion influencing academic success.	Encourage learner-centred support, belonging, cultural awareness.
Consoli et al. (2015)	Positive psychology; resilience; Snyder Hope Scale.	Psychological trait that predicts thriving and resilience.	Goal setting, spiritual connection, community identification.
D'Amico Guthrie & Fruiht (2020)	Student development and retention; Snyder Hope Scale.	Goal-directed thinking rooted in personal agency.	Supportive staff-student relationships and care-driven planning.
Fong et al. (2018)	Constructive feedback theory.	Individual sense of possibility through improvement-oriented feedback.	Balanced feedback and supportive student-teacher relationships.
Strodl et al. (2021)	Quality of Life Spirituality; Health locus of control scale.	Psychological trait connected to quality of life.	Counselling for spiritual wellbeing and coping support.

Sociocultural–Critical Orientation

Olave & Dillon (2022)	Freirean agency.	Capacity for individual and collective change.	Democratic learning environments and sense of community.
Ramezanzadeh et al. (2017)	Authenticity in teaching; Critical hope.	Action-oriented and transformative.	Authentic teaching, critical reflection, societal awareness.

Critical/Transformative Orientation

Gilbert (2021)	Critical theory (Freire, hooks, Giroux, Nussbaum).	Hope as an emotional and comic resistance.	Use of humour and care in reimagined student-teacher relationships.
Howell (2021)	Hage; Jansen.	An ambivalent resource shaped by social position; key factor in social change.	Promote individual coping and collective imagining to overcome hardships.
Sutton (2015)	Weber, Freire, Bloch.	Critical hope as engagement with present and future.	Dialogic and inclusive strategies fostering student agency.
Vandaele & Stalhammar (2022)	Coping theory (Lazarus); Snyder hope theory.	Constructive hope as emotional and collective.	Community dialogue, emotional awareness, collective future-making.

Individual conceptions of hope

The *individual* category reflects psychological and cognitive approaches to learning to hope. It focuses on students' internal states, psychological capital, and goal setting assuming a self-directed capacity towards cultivating hope. This conception of hope draws on psychological theories such as self-efficacy, psychological capital, cognitive behavioural models, and positive psychology frameworks (e.g., Snyder's Hope Theory), where hope is often instrumentalised as a measurable factor contributing to academic achievement, resilience, or wellbeing. Five studies reviewed fell into this category (see Table 3).

Figure 4 depicts a NVivo-generated word cloud generated from the analysed studies to denote individual-focused perspectives of hope. Dominant terms such as mental health, positivity, adaptability, resilience, stress, future orientation, and goals underscore a psychological framing of hope that can enhance student performance, wellbeing, and retention.

Figure 4

Dominant Hope related terms from articles within the Individual Orientation of Hope (n=5)

Applications of hope from this perspective emphasise individual hope-based endeavours such as supporting individual student development, adaptation, and mastery. Cognitive-based strategies and mindfulness and wellbeing techniques—all aimed to strengthen students' personal capacity to navigate educational and life challenges are highlighted (see Table 5). Practices that build agency and engagement such as goal setting, pathways thinking, and problem-solving to encourage high hope thinking (e.g., Jones et al., 2024) exemplify typical cognitive-based strategies. Mindfulness and wellbeing strategies nurture hope by supporting student stress management, emotional regulation, and overall holistic wellbeing activities (e.g., Barry et al., 2019). They include emotional intelligence training, self-care practices, resilience-building techniques and learning experiences that incorporate physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of student development.

These studies further advocate for campus-based support structures such as student counselling services and career centres to foster student agency and pathway thinking as part of strengthening learner coping mechanisms, goal setting and wellbeing. While this perspective contributes useful strategies for enhancing wellbeing through self-efficacy and learning engagement, it tends to overlook broader institutional, cultural, or structural contributors to student hope.

Table 4

Individual Hope Applications

Category	Focus	Practices	Sample Studies
Cognitive-based strategies	Fosters hope through agency, motivation, self-efficacy, and intentional future planning.	Teach cognitive strategies aligned with "willpower" and "waypower". Career planning and goal-setting exercises promoting pathways thinking. Future-oriented innovation and problem-solving activities.	Basar Gencer et al. (2024), Jones et al. (2024)
Personal wellbeing and emotional regulation	Nurtures hope through stress management skills and wellbeing.	Mindfulness programmes. Emotional intelligence training. Supporting self-care, resilience-building techniques (e.g., CBT). Holistic learning experiences (physical, cognitive, emotional, spiritual).	Barry et al. (2019) Bartos et al. (2023), Catling et al. (2022)
Institutional support for cultivating individual hope	Supports hope development through structural support systems for individualised development.	University-wide support programmes for developing student agency, wellbeing, and career preparedness. Counselling services to promote self-awareness/discovery, growth, and identity formation.	Basar Gencer et al. (2024), Catling et al. (2022)

Note. Some studies were coded in more than one category.

Sociocultural conceptions of hope

The *sociocultural* category foregrounds social constructivist and sociocultural approaches to conceiving hope. Rather than viewing hope as an individual trait, hope from this perspective is understood as a socially situated and relational phenomenon, co-constructed within educational contexts through networks of care, affirmation of identity, and experiences of belonging. Conceptualised this way, realisations of hope tend to align with dialogic pedagogies that view hopeful learning as situated, relational, and emergent within cultural contexts. In this framing, hope is cultivated through relationships, whether through caring pedagogies, co-teaching practices, collegial support, or authentic teacher-student engagement. Studies that conceptualise hope in this way at times also incorporate aspects of individual or critical orientations spanning across two categories of orientations of hope. While none of our analysed studies fell purely into the sociocultural category, it was a significant theme nevertheless in providing the theoretical basis for connecting and understanding the other two perspectives.

Five studies spanned both individual and sociocultural orientations of hope (see Table 3). While their theoretical orientations of hope were grounded in an individual-based theories such as Snyder's hope theory and Pekrun's control-value theory of emotions, the kinds of hope-based strategies they engendered drew from relational, emotional, and wider social support networks

be they from teachers, peers, institutional or broader family ties/communities to support personal agency and wellbeing. Figure 5's individual-to-sociocultural word cluster from these studies highlight dominant terms such as support, positivity, resilience, care, and motivation indicating a recognition of the social embeddedness of learners and the role of interpersonal support in cultivating hope.

Figure 5

Dominant Hope related terms from articles within the Individual-Sociocultural Orientation of Hope (n=5)

From this perspective, hope-based practices are nurtured through socioemotional and culturally responsive pedagogical strategies that emphasise relationality, belonging, and learner identity, particularly for students from marginalised and collectivist cultural backgrounds. Such strategies include relational teaching practices, culturally supportive activities, and institutional structures that affirm students' spiritual, cultural, and personal locus of meaning (see Table 5). They support students' agency, wellbeing, and sense of future possibility, for example, through peer mentoring, identity-affirming practices, and networks of care. Educator responsiveness—expressed through care, encouragement, motivation, enthusiasm, and support for student agency—plays a critical role in fostering hope and future-oriented thinking. Consoli et al.'s (2015) study on Latina/o students, for example, illustrates how they often experience hope through family and community relationships that affirm cultural resilience and relational identity. Other studies similarly highlight the importance of supporting students' self-discovery, relationship-building, and existential wellbeing (Allaire, 2022; D'Amico Guthrie & Fruiht, 2020; Strodl et al., 2021) that underscores the need for pedagogies supportive of student spirituality, cultural identity, and socioemotional development. University-wide support structures promote these aspects of student development by including peer mentoring and advising programmes.

Table 5

Individual–Sociocultural Hope Applications

Category	Focus	Practices	Sample Studies
Relational and responsive teaching	Nurtures hope through caring relationships, and inclusive pedagogical practices.	Positive educator–student relationships (praise, care, respect, clarity in goal setting). Teacher enthusiasm and motivation-building strategies (learner engagement and enjoyment). Learner-centred classrooms. Feedback provision as relational and developmental.	Allaire (2022), D'Amico Guthrie & Fruiht (2020), Fong et al. (2018), Strodl et al. (2021)
Belonging and cultural-spiritual responsiveness	Fosters hope by affirming cultural identity, spirituality, and community belonging.	Promote belonging, cultural pride, and connections. Affirm cultural and spiritual identities (e.g., Latino/a, Latinx, African American, Hindu students). Support for student meaning-making and existential wellbeing. Embed spirituality training (with respect for choice and autonomy).	Allaire (2022), Consoli et al. (2015), Strodl et al. (2021)
Agency development	Supports hope by cultivating purposeful academic planning through mentoring.	Promote academic planning and preparedness. Scaffold student agency and goal setting through classroom and campus-based mentoring.	Allaire (2022), D'Amico Guthrie & Fruiht (2020)
Institutional support	Sustains hope through coordinated, university-wide resources and culturally informed services.	University-wide support structures (counselling/mental health support). Advising and peer support systems. Support for existential wellbeing and health locus of control.	Consoli et al. (2015), D'Amico Guthrie & Fruiht (2020), Strodl et al. (2021)

Note. Some studies were coded in more than one category.

Two further studies combined sociocultural and critical orientations drawing from communal and critical responses to promote more democratic teaching-learning practices (e.g., Olave & Dillon, 2022; Ramezanzadeh et al., 2017) (see Table 3). Conceptions of sociocultural–to-critical/transformative hope partially draw from theoretical frameworks such as Freirean notions of agency highlighting hope as reforming existing systems cultivated through collective-critical agency, relational pedagogies, dialogic and participatory practices aiming towards social justice transformations in education. Figure 6's sociocultural-to-critical/transformative word cluster

highlights hope as more explicit engagement with authentic relationships, community, engagement, and agency, suggesting an emerging attention to power and collectives.

Figure 6

Dominant Hope related terms from articles within the Sociocultural-Critical/transformative Orientation of Hope (n=2)

Table 6 summarises the hope-based practices aligned with this view, highlighting the value of relational and inclusive pedagogies, collective agency, and justice-oriented teaching.

Table 6

Sociocultural-Critical/transformative Hope Applications

Category	Focus	Practices	Sample studies
Relational and inclusive pedagogies	Cultivates hope through authentic, caring, and democratic relationships.	Build inclusive communities of practice. Emphasise dialogic practices. Support participatory learning and student voice in shaping the educational experience.	Olave & Dillon (2022)
Collective agency and transformation	Fosters hope through empowering students and educators to critically engage and enact change.	Foster reflexivity and critical agency. Promote individual and collective responsibility. Support collective action towards future envisioning, challenging inequities and transforming current systems.	Olave & Dillon (2022)

| Justice-oriented teaching | Nurtures hope by addressing structural inequities through education. | Critical reflections on societal conditions; equity-oriented approaches in curriculum and teaching practices. | Olave & Dillon (2022), Ramezanzadeh et al. (2017) |

Note. Some studies were coded in more than one category.

Critical/transformative conceptions of hope

The final category, *critical/transformative* conceptions of hope draw from critical pedagogy and transformative learning theories (e.g., Freire, Giroux, Bloch), where hope is conceived as both a personal or interpersonal quality and a political and ethical imperative for radical societal shifts. Here, hopeful learning is conceived as a pathway to social transformation and collective agency. Hope is constructed through projects that confront structural injustices, imagine alternative futures, or equip learners to engage in sustainability, decolonisation, or activism. This category represents a smaller subset of studies where hope is neither a coping mechanism or motivator but a praxis that invites educators and students to collectively imagine and work towards more just and equitable futures. For example, Sutton (2015) articulates a "paradoxical academic identity" in which hope emerges amid the precarity and contradictions of neoliberal academic life. Howell (2021) examines hope in the context of an Afghani music school under threat, where hope is not a feeling but a defiant act of cultural survival. Figure 7 illustrates the critical/transformative word cloud with dominant terms such as engagement, change, future, transformation at the fore. It reflects a broader lexicon of change that speak to collective struggle, political consciousness, and utopian vision.

Figure 7

Dominant Hope related terms from articles within the Critical/transformative Orientation of Hope (n=4)

Table 7 summarises key practices supportive of a critical/transformative perspective of hope, including transformative pedagogical strategies that support student agency and critical awareness, strategies that acknowledge students' emotional experiences (e.g., Howell, 2021), strategies that challenge the structures of inequity (e.g., Sutton, 2021), and multilevel institutional supports that enable the enactment of critical hope through meaningful and inclusive education practices (e.g., Vandaele & Stalhammar, 2022).

Table 7

Critical/transformative Hope Applications

Category	Focus	Practices	Sample Studies
Transformative pedagogical practices	Nurtures hope through reimagined practices to support critical awareness and future-oriented agency.	Use of dialogic and inclusive pedagogies (e.g., humour and care to foster relationships). Reconcile curriculum with student experience. Promote student-led learning and critical engagement with ideas. Empower students to imagine and co-construct alternative futures.	Gilbert (2021), Howell (2021), Sutton (2015), Vandaele & Stalhammar (2022)
Emotional and collective resilience	Cultivates constructive hope through emotional awareness and communal solidarity.	Support students' affective experiences of hardship. Promote shared emotional expression and reflection. Offer opportunities for peer support, collective processing, community building. Encourage hopefulness and "hope in" through discourse about shared futures.	Howell (2021), Vandaele & Stalhammar (2022)
Challenging structural inequities and justice	Fosters hope by addressing inequities, positioning students as social agents for change.	Encourage reflections of hope, disappointment, and resilience. Facilitate discourse around personal and collective futures. Promote student agency at individual, collective, and institutional levels. Challenge reproduction of inequities through critical reflexivity and transformative assignments. Design inclusive and culturally responsive curricula. Promote equity through student choice, accessibility, and care in assessment and feedback.	Howell (2021), Sutton (2015), Vandaele & Stalhammar (2022)

		Develop pedagogies that acknowledge students as active social agents and foster agency.	
Institutional support	Establish multilevel supports to nurture critical hope and sustained transformative practices.	Establish multilevel approaches (institutional, relational, curricular) to support emotional wellbeing, agency, and dialogue.	Vandaele & Stalhammar (2022)
		Ensure structures for student voice, community cohesion, and belonging.	
		Create spaces for critical and emotional expression.	

Note. Some studies were coded in more than one category.

Discussion

In an era of converging crises (Apple et al., 2022) educators have a responsibility to empower learners with the dispositions and skills to confront these complexities. Hope is a fundamental quality and force to overcome life and lifeworld challenges. While studies regarding conceptions of hope including the way hope is realised or applied exist in the general and compulsory schooling sector (e.g., McKee et al., 2025), similar studies in the HE sector have been limited. Our scoping review sought to understand how hope is conceived and promoted in HE to add scholarly insights and inform intentional and evidence-based educational practices for supporting and fostering learner hopeful dispositions and actions for life and lifeworld challenges in diverse international contexts. To our knowledge, no other study has reviewed the evidence on hope and approaches to fostering hope in HE settings. Our review draws from international perspectives spanning a range of disciplines, methodologies, and teaching-learning contexts, emphasising hope and hope-based practices as a concern to educators worldwide.

Our findings affirm the value of fostering generative learner hope in enhancing achievement, engagement, wellbeing, and capacity to cope with life challenges (Grande & Staton, 2025; Suominen et al., 2025). Rather than a singular definition of hope, our findings point to multiple conceptions of hope, revealing it to be a multidimensional and dynamic construct. Our different word clouds (Figures 4–7) highlight the shifting conceptual terrain of hope conceptualised along a continuum: individual (intrapersonal), sociocultural (interpersonal), and critical/transformative (structural) levels—each with distinct implications for educator practice and institutional support.

Equally they portray how learner hope is understood in the HE teaching-learning context along a scalar continuum: as individuals, or individuals in communities, or individuals as part of wider societal discourses. These conceptions offer differing lenses and points of entry for educator practice (Tables 4–7). For example, conceptions of hope from an individual perspective draw evidence from psychological/cognitive studies based on individual learner trait attributes that can be measured and linked to educational outcomes. Related strategies to realise this view include facilitating learner productivity and success through self-awareness and identifying pathways towards future aspirations and goal setting.

Individual-to-sociocultural hope orientations build on the individual orientation as a basis for extending and promoting strategies espousing supportive and inclusive classroom environments,

emphasising teacher-student relationality, and attending to cultural and collective supports. While a minority, studies in our findings that span the sociocultural-to-critical category focus on enhancing relationships that are dialogic based and enable agentic learner roles.

Finally, critical/transformative conceptions of hope consider hope to be more situated, radical and relational-societal oriented to empower students to reimagine possibilities for hopeful futures through collective agency and justice-oriented discourse for social transformation.

Taken together, these applications of hope extend hope scholarship beyond critiques of hope that view it as "fluffy positivity," "hopium" (Grande & Staton, 2025) or Pollyanna-style optimism (hooks, 2003), naïve or uncritical hope (Boler & Zembylas, 2003; Zembylas, 2014), or aligned with views of hope as cruel optimism (Berlant, 2011). Rather, they present more grounded, relational, and transformative enactments of hope to address the complexities of HE practices. While these hope-based strategies are not novel nor unique to HE best practices (e.g., goal setting, teacher-learner relationality, collective approaches), they reveal nuanced and situated enactments of hope that nurture learner engagement and open possibilities amidst experiences of despair, apathy, and cynicism.

The majority of studies in our findings focused on the individual contemplations of hope, with a handful engaged with the critical/transformative hope orientation, moving outward in examining hope as a catalyst for societal transformation. These perspectives are not easily reconciled; each is rooted in different assumptions about where hope resides and how it operates in educational settings. There are inherent tensions between psychological models that seek measurable outcomes such as academic performance and critical pedagogical traditions that position hope as a force for structural change. Educators need to be clear on how they conceive and understand hope as they embark on hope-based scholarship. Particularly, questions such as 'Whose hope?' and 'Hope for what?' can be illuminating for examining one's beliefs and motivations for changing educational practice and shaping graduate outcomes.

These tensions may also be generative. Can individually focused hope studies better account for the broader political and ecological crises shaping students' lives? Might they open space for collective and relational expressions of hope, shifting from a narrow emphasis on personal success to a shared orientation toward flourishing futures? Vandaele and Stålhammar (2022) offer a compelling example of this integrative approach.

Conversely, critical/transformative studies might risk overlooking students' immediate needs, such as managing academic demands or building confidence, if they focus solely on long-term structural change. In this view, recognising the value of short-term achievement does not have to diminish the broader transformative vision of education; rather, it provides stepping stones that help students move from surviving to imagining and enacting more just futures.

Recommendations for further practice and research

Prospective hope-based practice and scholarship could usefully attend to (a) deepening conceptual understandings of hope and its applications across diverse HE contexts; (b) understanding educator views, the affective labour they undertake, and the structural conditions that shape their capacities to foster hope; and, (c) investigating how hope can be enacted at multiple scales—from classrooms and curriculum planning to institutional culture and policy.

Despite studies being situated among a range of geographic locations (Figure 2), the majority of individual orientations of hope were observed in texts related to Western worldviews such as those from the USA (n=6 of 10). Where non-Western contexts were observed, sociocultural and critical/transformative orientations of hope were typical (e.g., Consoli et al., 2015) indicating progressive interests in interrogating conceptions of hope across varied learner populations and contexts. There is scope for future studies to explore across the different conceptions of hope—individual/social/critical/transformative—that support a diversity of interpretations rather than a flattening homogenous definition. Fostering diversity could be achieved, for example, through cross-country studies examining the influence of diverse cross-cultural, ethnic, or linguistic factors. Establishing interdisciplinary collaborations for applying hope-based practices (e.g., teacher education, service learning) and planning for the integration of hope within curriculum scaffolding across whole programmes and university graduate outcomes are additional ways to deepen understandings of hope contemplations and its applications in classrooms and institutions. Such explorations would foster wider teacher-learner and community-societal relations fit for 21st century higher education.

Further, we acknowledge that the majority of articles were published in 2022 and focused on individual psychological/cognitive-based views of hope as a measurable trait due to the attention given to student psychological states and wellbeing levels during the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown (n=10). As we transition into a post-pandemic, next-normal era, there is both scope and need to recalibrate hope by exploring sociocultural and critical views that draw attention to relational and systems-wide supports, as well as to the seismic shifts shaping earning and living in the mid-21st century. This includes theorisation of hope in its intersections with power, justice, or decolonisation, especially in non-Western or Indigenous contexts.

The majority of studies orient students as hope's subject (increasing student hope to enhance resilience, engagement, or academic outcomes). There is limited exploration of educators' own hope (only n=3) (and despair), and how educators' hope shapes their hopeful pedagogy. This makes the affective labour of teachers and institutional cultures invisible. Educators typically struggle with how structural conditions in universities can undermine their ability to engage in hopeful pedagogies. Understanding educator perspectives are essential to promote reflexivity, awareness of their values, identity and beliefs shaping their practice and to shift towards the creation and strengthening of collectives for sharing and nurturing strategies for hopeful pedagogies (Olave & Dillon, 2022). This raises anthropocentric implications for courses and disciplines that advocate a postmaterial and post-human basis for transformation.

Only a few studies (e.g., Gilbert, 2021; Howell, 2021) engage with the affective complexity of hope, especially its entanglement with despair. While this ambivalence is recognised in the broader literature on hope (e.g., Beban et al. 2024; Verlie et al., 2021), this suggests a gap amongst pedagogical hope research recognising that hope, particularly in times of crisis (climate change, neoliberal university reform), may require sitting with ambivalence rather than overcoming it. It opens the opportunity to engage with those who disavow hope as a meaningful educational approach or practice.

Finally, most studies focused on the classroom context with few considering how hope might be embedded into curriculum design, assessment frameworks, or institutional cultures. Even fewer addressed how university policies, governance, or resource allocation might enable or constrain hopeful pedagogies. This emphasis on the micro-scale of the classroom may reflect researchers'

own locations within teaching roles, but it also risks placing the burden of hope solely on individual educators, without addressing the systemic changes needed to sustain hope in higher education. Future research could usefully expand the scale of analysis to examine how hope operates across institutional levels (e.g., leadership practices, strategic planning), interdisciplinary collaborations including wider initiatives (e.g., mutual learning endeavours with communities, enterprise, peak bodies, and society).

Limitations

While our study rigorously adhered to the PRISMA process for conducting scoping reviews, it was limited to a specific set of keyword terms and included only English-language peer-reviewed studies. It is possible therefore that relevant studies may have been overlooked. Particularly striking was the absence of studies on hope from fields such as environmental and sustainability studies (e.g., Strazds, 2019) including a more than human view of hope within HE (e.g., Bayley & Taylor, 2019) from our final dataset despite the known relevance of hope scholarship in these fields. Furthermore, restricting the review to only English publications introduces the risk of possible cultural and contextual bias. We have sought to be transparent in our reporting and indicate potential limitations to our findings consistent with the methodological guidance on scoping reviews. We are confident that our findings have provided a broad overview and guidelines typical of such approaches, allowing us to gain an understanding of the field to identify areas for further practice and research initiatives. Going beyond reference to peer-reviewed journal articles, future studies can consider broader reviews including systematic reviews covering diverse sources (book chapters, conference proceedings, theses) or across disciplinary contexts to enhance further insights.

Conclusion

This scoping review reveals the growing but uneven attention to hope within higher education research and practice. While many studies frame hope as a psychological trait that can be cultivated to improve student wellbeing and academic performance, others highlight its sociocultural and critical dimensions, emphasising the relational and politically transformative potential of hope. These varied orientations reflect different assumptions about where hope resides and what it is for; that is, is hope a force to enable student achievement, build student resilience, a practice of care, or a collective strategy for imagining and enacting more just futures? While we recognise that there are fundamental theoretical tensions between these views that may be difficult to resolve, we suggest that engaging with hope across these registers offers a useful approach, particularly in a time marked by institutional austerity, global uncertainty, and ongoing shifts in the digital learning landscape, where the emergence of artificial intelligence presents both challenges and possibilities for reimagining education.

Building on the traditions of hope scholarship, we intend to contribute to the broader conversation about the role of hope in higher education both as both a response to crisis and a dynamic, generative force for reimagining what education can be to open possibilities for transformation. As educators and researchers, we argue that now, more than ever, is the moment to take hope seriously, not as a naive optimism or fluffy positivity, but as a nuanced pedagogical orientation. Our review calls for a broader institutional commitment to nurturing hopeful teaching and learning environments, alongside deeper theoretical engagement with the complex and contested

meanings of hope. Hope can be a powerful force through which both students and educators can hold space for possibility, even amidst despair.

Acknowledgements

References

Note: "*" denotes records identified in the scoping review process.

Abegglen, S., Burns, T., Heller, R., Madhok, R., Neuhaus, F., Sandars, J., Sinfield, S., & Singh, U.G. (Eds.) (2025). *Stories of Hope: Reimagining Education.* Open Book Publishers. https://doi.org/10.11647/ OBP.0462.

*Allaire, F. S. (2022). Findings from a pilot study examining the positive and negative achievement emotions associated with undergraduates' first-year experience. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 23*(4), 850-872. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119881397

Apple, M., Biesta, G., Bright, D., Giroux, H., Heffernan, A., McLaren, P., . . . Yeatman, A. (2022). Reflections on contemporary challenges and possibilities for democracy and education. *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220620.2022.2052029

Arksey, H., & O'Malley, L. (2005). Scoping Studies: Towards a Methodological Framework. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology, 8*(1), 19– 32. https://doi.org/10.1080/1364557032000119616

*Barry, K. M., Woods, M., Martin, A., Stirling, C., & Warnecke, E. (2019). A randomized controlled trial of the effects of mindfulness practice on doctoral candidate psychological status. *Journal of American College Health*, *67*(4), 299-307. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1515760

Bayley, A., & Taylor, C. (2019). *Posthumanism and higher education: reimagining pedagogy, practice and research.* Palgrave Macmillan. https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ohCTDwAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PR5&dq=Posthumanism+and+higher+education:+reimagining+pedagogy,+practice+and+research.&ots=nRWG5vQ9s3&sig=lFOYcx3a8A0kyvxj1-uLrxZbu9A

Beban, A., Tie, W., & Wynyard, M. (2024). Editorial introduction: Towards sociologies of hope in Aotearoa New Zealand. *New Zealand Sociology, 39*(2), 28-30. https://search.informit.org/doi/10.3316/informit.T2024101400014491278716391

hooks, b. (2003). *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope.* Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Teaching-Community-A-Pedagogy-of-Hope/hooks/p/book/9780415968188?srsltid=AfmBOooOi0Y_v2p0FF-VVUtJL3rLXZo7tSP3e6XBoai-LtxSHHYFMi8j

Bourn, D. (2025). Putting into practice pedagogy of hope. *Policy and Practice: A Development Education Review, 41,* Autumn, 51-68.

Berlant, L. (2011). *Cruel optimism.* Duke University Press. https://www.dukeupress.edu/cruel-optimism?ref=writing.grpahicdeisgn.com

Boler, M., & Zembylas, M. (2003). Discomforting truths: The emotional terrain of understanding differences. In P. Trifonas (Ed.), *Pedagogies of difference: Rethinking education for social justice* (pp. 110–136).
Routledge. https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9780203465547-6/discomforting-truths-emotional-terrain-understanding-difference-megan-boler-michalinos-zembylas

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health, 11*(4), 589–597.
https://doi.org/10.1080/2159676X.2019.1628806

Chang, S. (2018). Scoping reviews and systematic reviews: Is it an either/or question? *Annals of Internal Medicine, 169*(7), 502–503. https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-2205

*Consoli, M. L. M., Delucio, K., Noriega, E., & Llamas, J. (2015). Predictors of resilience and thriving among Latina/o undergraduate students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 37*(3), 304-318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986315589141

Crawford, J., Cowling, M., Ashton-Hay, S., Kelder, J., Middleton, R., & Wilson, G. S. (2023). Artificial Intelligence and Authorship Editor Policy: ChatGPT, Bard Bing AI, and beyond. *Journal of University Teaching & Learning Practice, 20*(5).
https://doi.org/10.53761/1.20.5.01

*D'Amico Guthrie, D., & Fruiht, V. (2020). On-Campus Social Support and Hope as Unique Predictors of Perceived Ability to Persist in College. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 22*(3), 522-543.
https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118774932

Freire, P. (1994). *Pedagogy of hope: Reliving pedagogy of the oppressed.* Continuum.
https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/pedagogy-of-hope-9781350190207/

Grande, S., & Staton, A. R. (2025). Authentic hope during troubling times. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 183*, 79–85. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.20645

*Gilbert, C. J. (2021). A comic road to interiors, or the pedagogical matter of Gen Z humor. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, *21*(4), 69-88.
https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v21i4.32749

Gutierrez-Bucheli, L., Reid, A., & Kidman, G. (2022). Scoping reviews: Their development and application in environmental and sustainable education research. *Environmental Education Research*, *28*(5), 645–673. https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2022.2047896

Giroux, H. A. (2003). Youth, higher education, and the crisis of public time: Educated hope and the possibility of a democratic future. *Social Identities, 9*(2), 141–168.
http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/1350463032000101533

*Howell, G. (2021). Configurations of hope at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. *Musicae Scientiae*, *25*(3), 358-373. https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649211015793

*Jones, S. H., Campbell, B. D., Alarcon, I. V., & Putney, L. G. (2024). I Think I Can, I Hope I Can: Professional efficacy, hope, and identity among undergraduate engineering students. *Educational Research: Theory & Practice, 35*(1), 104-117. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1417702.pdf

Lopez, P. J. (2023). For a pedagogy of hope: imagining worlds otherwise. *Journal of Geography in Higher Education, 47*(5), 792–804. https://doi.org/10.1080/03098265.2022.2155803

McKee, L., Mitton, J., & Murray Orr, A. (2025). School pedagogies as resources for hope: An introduction to the special issue. *Pedagogies: An International Journal, 20*(1), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1080/1554480X.2025.2455093

Neves, J., & Brown, A. (2022). *Student experience survey.* Higher education policy institute. https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/2022-Student-Academic-Experience-Survey.pdf

O'Malley, P. (2009). Responsibilization. In A. Wakefield & J. Fleming (Eds.), *The SAGE Dictionary of Policing* (pp. 266–277). SAGE. https://www.google.co.nz/books/edition/The_SAGE_Dictionary_of_Policing/bqjN9di2UHIC?hl=en&gbpv=0

*Olave, B. T., & Dillon, J. (2022). Chilean physics teacher educators' hybrid identities and border crossings as opportunities for agency within school and university. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *59*(10), 1795-1821. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21774

Munn, Z., Peters, M.D.J., Stern, C. et al. (2018). Systematic review or scoping review? Guidance for authors when choosing between a systematic or scoping review approach. *BMC Med Res Methodology, 18*(143), 1-7. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0611-x

Nagy, J., & Burch, T. (2009). Communities of practice in academe (CoP-iA): understanding academic work practices to enable knowledge building capacities in corporate universities. *Oxford Review of Education, 35*(2), 227-247. http://www.jstor.org/stable/27784556

Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., Shamseer, L., Tetzlaff, J. M., Akl, E. A., Brennan, S. E., Chou, R., Glanville, J., Grimshaw, J. M., Hróbjartsson, A., Lalu, M. M., Li, T., Loder, E. W., Mayo-Wilson, E., McDonald, S., McGuinness, L. A., Stewart, L. A., Thomas, J., Tricco, A. C., Welch, V. A., Whiting, P., & Moher, D. (2021). The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. *BMJ, 372*(71). https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71

Peters, M. D. J., Godfrey, C. M., Khalil, H., McInerney, P., Parker, D., & Soares, C. B. (2015). Guidance for conducting systematic scoping reviews. *International Journal of Evidence-Based Healthcare, 13*(3), 141–146. https://doi.org/10.1097/XEB.0000000000000050

Peters, M. D., Godfrey, C., McInerney, P., Munn, Z., Tricco, A. C., & Khalil, H. (2020). Chapter 11: Scoping reviews. In E. Aromataris & Z. Munn (Eds.), *JBI manual for evidence synthesis* (pp. 406–451). Joanna Briggs Institute. https://doi.org/10.46658/JBIMES-20-12

Purvis, A.J. & Crawford, J. (2024). Ethical standards in educational research and publication. *Journal of University Teaching and Learning Practice, 21*(9). https://doi.org/10.53761/hqnqr710

*Ramezanzadeh, A., Zareian, G., Adel, S., & Ramezanzadeh, R. (2017). Authenticity in teaching: a constant process of becoming. *Higher Education*, *73*(2), 299-315. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0020-1

Schwittay, A. (2023). Teaching critical hope with creative pedagogies of possibilities. Pedagogy, *Culture & Society, 33*(1), 85–103. https://doi.org/10.1080/14681366.2023.2187439

Suominen, A., Anttila, E., & Laes, T. (2025). Pedagogies of hope in times of crises: Meanings of Arts Education throughout the lifespan. In Klepacki, T., van Meerkerk, E., Østern, T.P. (Eds.). *Arts and Cultural Education in a Challenging and Changing World.* Yearbook of the European Network of Observatories in the Field of Arts and Cultural Education (ENO). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-97-1896-2_2

Strazds, L. M. (2019). Radical hope: Transforming sustainability. *Journal of Sustainability Education, 21*, 1–18. https://www.susted.com/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Strazds-JSE-December-2019-General-Issue-PDF.pdf

*Strodl, E., Mani, M., Vempaty, S., & Deb, S. (2021). Correction to: Quality of life and spirituality in Indian university students. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, *16*(4), 1823-1823. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-020-09861-y

*Sutton, P. (2015). A paradoxical academic identity: Fate, utopia and critical hope. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *20*(1),37-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2014.957265

Tricco, A. C., Lillie, E., Zarin, W., O'Brien, K. K., Colquhoun, H., Levac, D., Moher, D., Peters, M. D., Horsley, T., Weeks, L., & Hempel, S. (2018). PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): Checklist and explanation. *Annals of Internal Medicine, 169*(7), 467–473. https://doi.org/10.7326/M18-0850

*Vandaele, M., & Stålhammar, S. (2022). "Hope dies, action begins?" The role of hope for proactive sustainability engagement among university students. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *23*(8), 272-289. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-11-2021-0463

Verlie, B., Clark, E., Jarrett, T., & Supriyono, E. (2021). Educators' experiences and strategies for responding to ecological distress. *Australian Journal of Environmental Education, 37*(2), 132–146. https://doi.org/10.1017/aee.2020.34

Webb, D. (2025). Hope amid the ruins? The project of critical university studies. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 44,* 513–531. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-025-09996-1

Williams, R. J., & Grain, K. (2025). Teaching in a time of climate collapse: From "an education in hope" to a praxis of critical hope. *Sustainability, 17*, 5459. https://doi.org/10.3390/su17125459

Zembylas, M. (2014). Affective, political and ethical sensibilities in pedagogies of critical hope: Exploring the notion of 'critical emotional praxis'. In V. Bozalek, B. Leibowitz, R. Carolissen, & M. Boler (Eds.), *Discerning critical hope in educational practices* (pp. 11–25).
Routledge. https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/books/mono/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203431115&type=googlepdf

Zembylas, M. (2017). Practicing an ethic of discomfort as an ethic of care in higher education teaching. *Critical Studies in Teaching and Learning, 5*(1), 1–17. https://www.ajol.info/index.php/cristal/article/view/158623

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of Keywords Extracted from the Different Conceptualisations of Hope in the Final 16 articles

Keywords	Conceptualisation of hope			
	Individual (n=5)	Individual to Sociocultural (n=5)	Sociocultural to Critical (n=2)	Critical/Transformative (n=4)
Adaptability	115	2	1	0
Agency	17	13	68	44
Anxiety	72	41	0	21
Authenticity	0	0	111	3
Belief	9	29	6	10
Care	13	44	7	15
Change	55	34	41	108
Community	9	28	71	22
Connection	6	24	3	12
Control	56	55	2	11
Depression	77	10	1	7
Despair	0	0	0	38
Engagement	10	8	21	95
Future	127	15	27	104
Goals	67	74	7	34
Hopelessness	8	22	3	11
Imagination	1	3	1	37
Mental health	232	114	0	3
Motivation	29	73	1	14
Openness	19	7	14	19
Optimism	31	6	0	4
Persistence	13	24	0	0
Positivity	123	95	40	37
Possibility	18	17	30	46
Purpose	19	25	16	20
Resilience	106	70	0	3
Self-efficacy	58	3	0	0
Stress	125	29	1	7
Support	45	294	2	25
Transformation	10	3	26	60

Appendix 2: The 16 Final Studies Reviewed

Allaire, F. S. (2022). Findings from a pilot study examining the positive and negative achievement emotions associated with undergraduates' first-year experience. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *23*(4), 850-872. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025119881397

Barry, K. M., Woods, M., Martin, A., Stirling, C., & Warnecke, E. (2019). A randomized controlled trial of the effects of mindfulness practice on doctoral candidate psychological status. *Journal of American College Health*, *67*(4), 299-307. https://doi.org/10.1080/07448481.2018.1515760

Bartos, L. J., Posadas, M. P., & Krägeloh, C. (2023). Perceived benefits of a remote yoga and mindfulness program for student musicians during COVID-19. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, *51*(3), 303-328. https://doi.org/10.1037/hnm0000277

Başar Gençer, D., Bican, B., Yıldırım, Ş., & Zeren, Ş. G. (2024). The effects of "My Career Story" online psychoeducation program on hope, career adaptability, and career future perception during the COVID-19 pandemic: A mixed method research. *Yıldız Journal of Educational Research, 9*(1), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.14744/yjer.2024.001

Catling, J., Michail, M., Lakhani, N., & Devine, R. (2022). Psychological and lifestyle predictors of mental health in higher education: How healthy are our students? *The Journal of Mental Health Training, Education and Practice*, *17*(6), 562-571. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMHTEP-08-2021-0092

Consoli, M. L. M., Delucio, K., Noriega, E., & Llamas, J. (2015). Predictors of resilience and thriving among Latina/o undergraduate students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences*, *37*(3), 304-318. https://doi.org/10.1177/0739986315589141

D'Amico Guthrie, D., & Fruiht, V. (2020). On-Campus Social Support and Hope as Unique Predictors of Perceived Ability to Persist in College. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 22*(3), 522-543. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025118774932

Fong, C. J., Schallert, D. L., Williams, K. M., Williamson, Z. H., Warner, J. R., Lin, S., & Kim, Y. W. (2018). When feedback signals failure but offers hope for improvement: A process model of constructive criticism. *Thinking Skills and Creativity, 30*, 42-53. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tsc.2018.02.014

Gilbert, C. J. (2021). A Comic Road to Interiors, or the Pedagogical Matter of Gen Z Humor. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching & Learning*, *21*(4), 69-88. https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v21i4.32749

Howell, G. (2021). Configurations of hope at the Afghanistan National Institute of Music. *Musicae Scientiae*, *25*(3), 358-373. https://doi.org/10.1177/10298649211015793

Jones, S. H., Campbell, B. D., Alarcon, I. V., & Putney, L. G. (2024). I Think I Can, I Hope I Can: Professional Efficacy, Hope, and Identity among Undergraduate Engineering Students. *Educational Research: Theory & Practice, 35*(1), 104-117. http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1417702.pdf

Olave, B. T., & Dillon, J. (2022). Chilean physics teacher educators' hybrid identities and border crossings as opportunities for agency within school and university. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, *59*(10), 1795-1821. https://doi.org/10.1002/tea.21774

Ramezanzadeh, A., Zareian, G., Adel, S., & Ramezanzadeh, R. (2017). Authenticity in teaching: a constant process of becoming. *Higher Education*, *73*(2), 299-315. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10734-016-0020-1

Strodl, E., Mani, M., Vempaty, S., & Deb, S. (2021). Correction to: Quality of life and spirituality in Indian university students. *Applied Research in Quality of Life*, *16*(4), 1823-1823. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11482-020-09861-y

Sutton, P. (2015). A paradoxical academic identity: Fate, utopia and critical hope. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *20*(1),37-47. https://doi.org/10.1080/13562517.2014.957265

Vandaele, M., & Stålhammar, S. (2022). "Hope dies, action begins?" The role of hope for proactive sustainability engagement among university students. *International Journal of Sustainability in Higher Education*, *23*(8), 272-289. https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSHE-11-2021-0463

Appendix 3: Details of the Final 16 Studies

Authors	Year	Country of Study	Study Aim	Study Design	Population (Who and discipline)
Allaire	2022	USA	Analysed the emotions of achievement.	Quantitative	First-year undergraduate students
Barry et al.	2019	Australia	Examined the potential impact of mindfulness training on psychological distress and psychological capital.	Quantitative	Doctoral candidates
Bartos et al.	2023	Spain	Examined the experiences of students trained with CRAFT-based practices for mindfulness and emotional intelligence to improve health and well-being during lockdown.	Qualitative	Music undergraduate students
Basar Gencer et al.	2024	Türkiye	Examined the effects of an online psychoeducation programme.	Mixed methods	Undergraduate students
Catling et al.	2022	Britain / UK	Examined psychological and lifestyle predictors of mental health in a vulnerable group.	Quantitative	First-year female undergraduate students
Consoli et al.	2015	USA	Examined the predictors of resilience and thriving.	Quantitative	Latina/o undergraduate students
D'Amico and Fruiht	2020	USA	Explored the role of hope and social support in predicting student satisfaction with academic progress and the perceived ability to achieve educational goals.	Quantitative	Undergraduate students
Fong et al.	2018	USA	Explored student perceptions and experiences of receiving constructive feedback, and to create a model on constructive feedback.	Qualitative	Undergraduate students

Gilbert	2021	USA	Considered how humour contributes to the view of a generational problem of despair alongside pedagogies of hope.	Conceptual	English undergraduate students
Howell	2021	Afghanistan	A critical perspective on hope as a factor of social change through music education and cultural development.	Conceptual	Music undergraduate students and staff
Jones et al.	2024	USA	Explored the relationships between hope, self-efficacy, and professional identity.	Quantitative	Engineering undergraduate students
Olave and Dillon	2022	Chile	Examined how being both a school teacher and a teacher educator shape agentic activities within the university and school context.	Qualitative	Physics teacher educators
Ramezanzadeh et al.	2017	Iran	Explored the conceptualisation of (in)authenticity in teaching, focusing on pedagogical practices and relationships.	Qualitative	University teachers
Strodl et al.	2021	India	Investigated the association between measures of students' spirituality and Quality of Life.	Quantitative	Indian mostly Hindu Students
Sutton	2015	UK	Explored the paradox in moving between sociological theory and educators' lived experiences.	Conceptual	University educators
Vandaele and Stålhammar	2022	Sweden & Europe	Addressed how constructive hope is manifested and fostered among students.	Qualitative	Sustainability postgraduate students

Appendix 4: Details of Contemplations of Hope and Their Applications

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Individual orientation of hope (n=5)			
Barry et al. (2019)	Psychological capital (Luthans et al.)	An individual psychological resource (along with, and differentiated from, optimism, resilience, and efficacy).	Support students to develop regular self-care practice through a mindfulness programme to reduce stress and promote wellbeing.
Bartos et al. (2023)	Positive psychology (Peterson, 2006)	A positive individual trait that enables coping and well-being to deal with changes.	Provide students with a holistic educational experience synergistically considering physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual aspects of well-being. Programmes based on mindfulness and emotional intelligence.
Basar Gencer et al. (2024)	Psychoeducation; Snyder Dispositional Hope Scale (1991)	An individual's ability to adopt methods to achieve goals and the motivation to put them into practice.	Support student self-awareness through positive encouragement from university psychological counselling and career centre. Promote a sense of belonging, self-discovery, planning/preparedness (for career planning), experiencing and shaping their futures through goal setting.
Catling et al. (2022)	Positive psychology; Mental health; Snyder Adult Hope Scale	An individual psychological trait; predictor of student mental health outcomes.	Promote resilience-building strategies for first-year female students through university wide support (e.g., CBT, mindfulness techniques, problem-solving therapy).
Jones et al. (2024)	Snyder Future Scale; Self-efficacy; Professional identity	An individual perceived capability to derive pathways to goals and motivate oneself to achieve those goals (Snyder).	Support students with opportunities to develop problem-solving skills and invoking innovation to encourage high hope thinking. Support student development of willpower and waypower. Institutional support needed.

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Individual to sociocultural orientation of hope (n=5)			
Allaire (2022)	Pekrun (Positive/negative emotions)	A positive emotion influencing student success.	Promote a sense of belonging and preparedness to undertake rigours of undergraduate studies
			Strategies promoting:
			- positive relationship between instructors-students
			- engagement with course content
			- enjoyment of classes
			- supportive classroom environments that is learner-centred
			- for minority students (Latino/as), awareness of their personal and familial/cultural issues, and,
			- university-wide support.
Consoli et al. (2015)	Positive psychology; Resilience; Snyder et al. (1996) Hope scale	A psychological trait that is a predictor value of thriving and resilience; cultivated through relationships and can influence academic success.	Relevant practices include:
			- University-wide strategies that promote goal setting
			- promoting spirituality (meaning making, religiosity, general spiritual awareness) and cultural pride (feeling of interconnectedness to a cultural group and/or community)
			- Familial relationships played a less significant role.
			Focus on Latino/a undergraduate students.
D'Amico Guthrie & Fruiht (2020)	Student development and retention; Snyder hope scale (1991)	Psychological construct characterised by goal-directed thinking rooted in personal agency (Snyder).	Campus-based support through teachers, advisors, staff members to develop student agency and pathway thinking to achieve goals.
			Teachers spending time and care for students - setting clear goals for students and class, having a clear plan to achieve course goals (pathways), demonstrating enthusiasm about the course material to promote motivation (agency), and praising student effort in the learning process along with learning content.
			Build relationships to develop a network of support, particularly for African American and Latinx students.

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Fong et al. (2018)	Constructive feedback theory	Individual sense of possibility; emerges through 'feedback for improvement'.	Support for learning through constructive feedback by: - developing a caring and respectful relationship between instructors and students - nature of feedback to reflect a balance in assessing students' needs for improvement, emotions, and knowledge in the context of personally caring for the student's work and development. Students need to be guided in how to interpret and act on the feedback.
Strodl et al. (2021)	Quality of life; Spirituality; Hope measured through Health Locus of Control Scale	An individual psychological trait connected to quality of life.	Study focused on Indian Hindu postgraduate students. Recognised the importance of cultural factors, negative religious coping, existential wellbeing, and health locus of control. Strategies are aimed to reduce students' negative religious coping (i.e., beliefs of being abandoned or punished by God, or a tenuous relationship with God,). Student counselling services and mental health providers needed to support student negative religious coping, and existential wellbeing. Embed spirituality training programmes. Recognise the need to respect personal values and choice in engaging in such interventions. Institutional support structures are important.

Sociocultural to critical transformative orientation of hope (n=2)

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Olave & Dillon (2022)	Freirean agency grounded in hope and autonomy	Hope as capacity for individual and collective change through agency.	Promote opportunities for individual and collective agency, and reflexivity. Recognise inter-relationships between the communities students are a part of to empower possibilities for enacting agency, transforming, or reproducing different educational structures. Developing a community of practice/sense of community for working in a collegial, democratic, horizontal manner. Teachers regarded as actors with expertise.

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
			Need to recognise the importance of the collectives for challenging individualistic neoliberal cultures.
Ramezanzadeh et al. (2017)	Authenticity in teaching; Critical hope	Critical hope addressing inequality and enabling transformation.	Promote authenticity in teaching relationships with students through:
			- teaching strategies such as personal willingness to take on responsibilities, fulfil duties and obligations, and own up to their mistakes and weaknesses.
			- promoting equality at the macro-level of wider societal contexts, taking action to deal with inequalities in practice.
			- critical reflection of inequalities to envision a better world where everyone can enjoy prosperity and happiness (hope non-naive and critical because it not only recognise inequality but sought to transform it)
			- constantly challenging themselves and their educational contexts in their search for equality in order to find their freedom from otherness while respecting and reflecting on others
			- requires dialogic discourse
			- allows for more participatory roles of students in the classroom to find their own voice amid other voices.

Critical transformative orientation of hope (n=4)

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Gilbert (2021)	Paul Freire, bell hooks, Henry A. Giroux, Nussbaum	Pedagogy of hope; where hope 'mingles with despair' and requires a 'comic spirit' with capacity to 'hope against hope'.	Use of humour and care.
			Reimagining student-teacher relationships in a manner that lets students lead the way.
			Use of a comic pedagogy:
			- a pedagogy of caring about what students care about and thereby reconciling course materials with the (comic) spirit they bring to educational spaces
			- as a strategy to enliven the classroom space and culture.

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Howell (2021)	Hage (2003); Jansen (2016)	An ambivalent resource shaped by societal positioning, a key factor in individual and collective social change; both individual and collective.	Focus on supporting students to develop hope (affective state) as a resource for coping with hardships. Developing student agency towards a future. Supporting both positively charged and disappointable dispositions, both hope for/in something and hopefulness. Promote collective discourse towards an imagined future to overcome constraints of socio-economic hardships. Focus on Afghanistan students.
Sutton (2015)	Weber (rationalisation); Freire (Critical hope); Bloch (educated hope); Halpin	Critical hope as forward-facing engagement with past and present.	Teaching strategies that support students to: - dream of a better future - adopt strategies that are dialogic, situational, and transformative - positions learners as 'active social agents - make careful pedagogic choices concerning their coding and presentation of knowledge so that it is accessible and inclusive - participate in engaged learning strategies (e.g., building assignment guidance sessions into the curriculum, promoting student choice in assignments). View of students as active producers rather than passive reproducers. Critical reflection on current realities to foster a desire for change.

Author (Year)	Theoretical Influences	Conceptualisation	Practices
Vandaele & Stalhammar (2022)	Snyder (2000) theory of hope; Lazarus and Folkman (1984) theory of coping strategies; Webb (2007) modes of hoping)	"Constructive hope" as a path to proactive engagement. This is a tangible, embodied and practiced form of hope grounded in the vision of desirable yet possible futures with collectively outlined pathways to reach these futures.	Recognise constructive hope as a positive emotion, inter-relatedness of constructive hope and action.
			Focuses on the relationship between instructor-students.
			Provide student with opportunities and tools to understand and collectively discuss their emotional processes and inner transformations.
			Raises student awareness of the role of constructive hope to turn negative emotions into proactive engagement.
			Promotes student social cohesion and communal ties to reinforce mutual emotional and agency support (sense of community/communal support).
			Need to constructively discuss conflicting views and the transgression of one's behaviour.
			Requires a multi-level university wide approach to cultivate constructive hope to:
			- foster a sense of community
			- promote discussions and envisioning of the future
			- support a sense of agency at the individual, collective and professional level
			- develop trust toward external actors
			- provide space for emotional expression.