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Educator views regarding young people's aspirations in peripheral coastal communities in England: A Q study.

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In this paper we deploy data collected through a Q study with educators in South West England. The mixed methodology involved the two stages of forced choice statement sorting by educator participants and subsequent factor analysis. Through abductive analyses, four views regarding aspirations and young people in peripheral communities are identified. Of these, only one viewpoint, named 'acknowledge the barriers to finding employment', aligns with taken for granted narratives on encouraging school students to pursue careers in the knowledge economy, with transition to higher education being the acknowledged pathway to flourishing futures. Three further viewpoints are identified and discussed. The paper contributes new insights to understanding educational landscapes in peripheral places through employing a novel approach, that of Q method, to illuminate educators' lived experiences in such communities.

Keywords: coastal; aspirations; students; Q; educators.

Introduction

Delivering good quality schooling in peripheral places is a vexing problem (Echazarra & Radinger, 2019). When an urban-centred template is applied to schools in peripheral communities, a deficit narrative emerges that is fuelled by the dominance of urban scholarship regarding education (Beach & Öhrn, 2019) and the failure to consider place as deeply impacting upon people's lives and opportunities (Cuervo, 2016). In particular, in the global north, these schools often fall short of anticipated educational outcomes, facing: challenges in the recruitment and retention of teachers (See et al., 2020); low achievement by students when compared with urban peers (Bæck, 2016; Odell, 2017) and poor rates of student transition to higher education (Gale & Parker, 2015; Kilpatrick

et al., 2021). Regarding the lattermost issue, in this study we seek to unpack the notion of aspirational post-school transitions for young people in peripheral places through dialogue with educators located in the South West coastal peninsular of England. Educators' views on young people's futures matter because they are significant shapers of students' orientations for future lives (Gao et al., 2022; Gemici et al., 2014).

Having robust aspirations is reported as effectively positioning young people to engage with the knowledge economy and is of benefit to them through their subsequent accelerated social mobility (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2018; Social Mobility Commission, 2021). Aspiration has been firmly cemented into recent UK governmental initiatives for widening participation in higher education by non-traditional student cohorts and adopted as a key strategy for tackling social exclusion in marginal communities (Marzi, 2016; Spohrer, 2011). The consensus regarding aspirational futures is that

> a desire to stay on at school and to attend (any) university, and to aim for a job which requires qualifications and skills is taken to be indicative of higher aspirations while leanings towards early school leaving and a lower skill job is taken as a sign of lower aspirations (Kintrea et al., 2015, p. 667).

Our interrogation of aspirations focusses on variant interpretations revealed by educators sited in a peripheral context, one that has received scant research investigation. The Q method is deployed to elicit new perspectives, some that potentially challenge this taken for granted discourse. Through reliance on pre-set statements, factor analysis and subsequent abductive analyses (Watts & Stenner, 2012), the methodology allows for the exploration of viewpoints that might otherwise remain silenced, as well as contextualised insights regarding how educators potentially manage notions of aspiration, when working with their students.

Aspirational futures and young people in peripheral communities

Sociocultural views of aspiration (Appadurai, 2004; Bourdieu, 1984; Nussbaum, 2011) approach the phenomenon as multi-dimensional and situated. Hart (2016, p. 326) has described aspirations as 'future-oriented, driven by conscious and unconscious motivations and they are indicative of an individual or group's commitments towards a particular trajectory or end point'. That is, aspirations are 'not simply an array of all futures from which people pick and choose according to individual taste' (Gale & Parker, 2015, p. 141). Nonetheless, in much British education policy and public opinion, the unrealistic implication is that there is an endless list of advancements from which nearly all should be encouraged to choose freely (Brown, 2013; Chadderton, 2020). Notably, the locus of responsibility for becoming aspirational and subsequently achieving social mobility has shifted to resting with the individual. This is consistent with schools being tasked with the cultivation in young people of strong career and opportunity seeking ambitions. That is, the subject takes on responsibility for their own trajectory, which Raco (2009, p. 438) presented as the shift from expectational citizenship to the 'entrepreneurial and dynamic modes of aspirational citizenship'. While the dynamic aspirational student is presented as the ideal subject, scant attention has been paid to the experiences of young people while they are navigating the realities of complex modernity in the locales where they are living (Beach et al., 2019; Pimlott-Wilson, 2017). The concept of rural space advanced by Reid et al. (2010) foregrounds these lived experiences contending that the everyday interactions and routines that individuals engage with and the people that they encounter in their locale, can cultivate orientations for young people's likely future lives.

Young people in peripheral communities do hold aspirations (Ravn, 2021; St. Clair et al., 2013), but these are often shaped in ways that differ to those of their urban counterparts. To unpack the forces shaping young people's aspirations socio-spatial factors have to be taken into account (Corbett & Forsey, 2017; Cuervo, 2016; Marzi, 2016), for there is an array of influences specific to remote communities that 'either do not apply to urban populations or are factors whose effect may be experienced more intensely by rural populations' (Kilpatrick et al., 2021, p. 220). Factors such as: local employment opportunities, family history and finances as well as an awareness of and the capability to negotiate higher education, prevail. Specifically, individuals' deeply held habituated dispositions are potentially powerful contributors (Gibson et al., 2021; Zipin et al., 2015). While it is expected that some young people in peripheral communities' schools will take up pathways consistent with entering the valorised knowledge economy, others will not for specific reasons. In sum, as indicated above, the discourse on promoting aspiration centred on post-school transition to highly educated careers servicing the knowledge economy is at best, highly 'ambivalent with regard to place(s)' (Roberts & Green, 2013, p. 768).

The study site: the coastal South West of England

Our focal region, South West England, comprises agricultural and many coastal seaside landscapes (Hayward & Fleury, 2020). In extant studies, British coastal resort towns have been described as particular settings (Agarwal et al., 2018). We contend that the coastal town is a specific (peripheral) space, i.e. 'not just location and landmarks', but rather, a space that comprises 'the people that one meets and interacts with, and what one does together in their environs' as proposed by Reid et

al. (2010, p. 270). As summarised by these authors, 'social space is the set of relationships, actions and meanings that are produced in and through the daily practice of people in a particular place and time' (Reid et al., 2010, p. 269). We extend this to the notion of the coastal space to incorporate the 'environment (geography), population (demography), industry (economy)' (Green & Reid, 2021. p. 39) and overlying national policy, in order to site the peripheral coastal schools within their socioeconomic, historical and cultural contexts (Passy & Ovenden-Hope, 2020: Stokes et al., 2020). For the large part, English seaside communities have endured decades of economic decline, exacerbated by the globalised tourism and travel industry, which continues to undermine the traditional British summer holiday that once sustained them (Office for National Statistics, 2020). Moreover, their denizens have invariably come to typify 'left-behind' communities with backward-facing mind sets: prejudiced parochial views deemed as being out of step with contemporary metropolitan life (Crouch, 2019). However, not all coastal locations have undergone similar trajectories. In recent decades some have emerged as exclusive cosmopolitan retreats offering idyllic escapes for elites (Eshelby, 2021). In other instances, they have undergone transformative influxes of urban dwellers, potentially negatively impacting upon the availability of local services, for example, the supply of affordable housing (Long, 2021).

The study aims

This research was carried out in peripheral coastal communities where environmental, population and industry-related realities are liable to fit uneasily with metro-normative discourses on desirable career aspirations for young people. Nonetheless, educators are tasked with encouraging young people towards higher

education and subsequent employment in the knowledge economy. We applied the rigorous sequential stages of Q method to combine qualitative and quantitative procedures (Watts & Stenner, 2012) to contribute novel insights, specifically with respect to educators' orientations as they navigate their own experiences as well as manage students' realities against this peripheral landscape.

Method

Q methodology was instigated by William Stephenson in the 1930s as a scientific approach to studying people's subjective opinions on a given issue (Watts & Stenner, 2012). While still relatively little used, it has been adopted recently for the investigation of education matters, being deployed to explore the subjectivities of teachers and students regarding various educational debates (Lundberg et al., 2020). Our interest in this approach is prompted by the opportunity Q offers to shift away from the conventional qualitative analysis of participants' narratives that have been collected on an individual basis. Instead, here we focus on developing opinions shared by groups which individual participants, when speaking alone, might fail to voice. The stages of the Q process are carefully followed thereby allowing researchers to establish the profile of each group in the study and develop a characterised account of its commonly shared opinion (Brown, 1980). Researchers are then positioned to hypothesise new conceptualised explanations with respect to these shared viewpoints. We contend that these affordances of Q, namely, the rigorous process and novel outcomes, make it an appropriate approach for undertaking in-depth investigation of the subjectivities of educators regarding young people's aspirations in a little researched context.

Participants

Participants deemed able to contribute insights were invited to join the study, as having relevant knowledge is a precondition for participation under Q methodology (Brown, 1980). Hence, the recruitment strategy was theoretically informed in that only those educators with direct experience of the focal situation were targeted. There were 23 participants in total (see Table 1). Information was collected to identify their status (e.g. early career teacher). Those identified as early career teachers were in their first jobs, having spent less than two years teaching in schools. Whilst data were collected about their workplaces, including proximity to the coast and the size of the neighbouring community (estimated population), personal identifiers, such as participant or school/employer names, were not surveyed.

[Table 1. About here]

Concourse and implementation

The concourse for a Q study comprises a comprehensive body of information on the phenomenon under investigation. The concourse is made up from 'things lay people, politicians, representative organizations, professionals, scientists have to say about the topic; this is the raw material for Q' (Van Exel & De Graaf, 2005 p. 4). Unlike conventional research approaches, the set of statements (Q set), selected from the raw material, forms the study sample. For the current study, the statements were gathered by the researchers from: literatures on turning around schools in seaside locations; initial teacher education recruitment policy documents; and a

local government public report on improving social inclusion in the focal geographic area. A framework was established to assist the researchers with the operationalising of the raw material to form the sample (Q set). That is, to ensure that the sample had comprehensive coverage of the focal topic of aspirations in peripheral coastal communities, two concepts were identified. The first was opportunities, i.e. facilitators and hindrances to aspirational futures. The second addressed the geographic level at which factors were potentially impacting: national and local, which respected the notion of place as central to the study. A Fisher's balanced block design forming a 2×2 block covering the two main dimensions was applied. Five statements were each placed in the four cells. Ten additional statements were included that did not fit under these headings, but were prioritised by the researchers owning to their prior knowledge of the topic. In total 30 statements were deployed in the Q set.

The online Q method tool (Lutfallah & Buchanan, 2019) was used for data collection and subsequent analyses. The link to the online Q method study, comprising the sort grid and statements, was distributed by email to potential participants working across the region through their school (workplace) secretariat. Participants were asked to carry out the forced choice sort activity and allocate the 30 statements to their chosen spaces on the Q sort grid that was presented to them. The notion of subjectivity, under Q method, refers to the individual's self-referent choices (Stephenson, 1953), namely, their emic orientations and opinions. The participants' comprehension of the topic, orientation towards it and the meanings they assign to the statements are inherently important as they articulate their own accounts through the process of sorting the statements to complete their own individual grid. The grid in this study comprised a distribution from 'most disagree'

(-4) to 'most agree' (+4), with 30 spaces for the statements requiring sorting (Figure 1).

[Figure 1 about here]

Given that discourse regarding creating aspiration amongst young people is dominated by powerful policy voices, care was duly taken in the study to ensure that participants felt free to sort the statements from their own perspective without researcher influence. To this end, the instructions given to participants were phrased in neutral terminology and it was clearly explained that there was no 'correct' response for the study. Moreover, statements were open to multiple interpretations and were listed on the platform in a randomised manner. When a participant had completed their sort activity, they were asked for details on their job role, work location and to provide a written commentary describing what aspirations meant for their school students in terms of preparing them for their future lives. This information assisted with forming a comprehensive overview with respect to the participants' viewpoints, as required for the subsequent data analyses and interpretation processes. The participants gave consent to their responses being collected and used by the researchers. Ethical approval for this project was granted by the School of Education Research Ethics Committee, Bath Spa University, England.

Results

The sorts made by all the participants were correlated by person (McKeown & Thomas, 1988) and the degree of similarity and dissimilarity between them

observed. Eight principal components (PCA) were extracted and a Varimax rotation applied. Through scrutiny of the scree plot and the eigenvalues, four factors were identified as best fitting the 23 sorts made by the participants, which accounted for 64% of the variance. Out of the 23 sorts available for analysis, one did not load onto any of the four factors at 0.50. Table 2 indicates the flagged sorts under each of the factors. Factor scores are likened to weighted z-scores that are converted into the factor array for the study (McKeown & Thomas, 1988), which in this study covered the -4 to +4 values presented in the Q sort grid.

[Table 2 about here]

Interpretation and naming of the four viewpoints
We were seeking through the Q method to identify groups of educators who were like-minded in the way they considered the focal topic of young people's aspirations, whilst also identifying points of convergence and divergence across the cohort of 23 participants (Donner, 2001). This study captured the subjective points of view of a chosen population, with no interest in advancing generalisation to a wider one (Etikan et al., 2016). The factor outputs identified through the analytic techniques were subjected to abductive analysis. That is, the factor groupings emerging in the data through the statistical processes were taken as the starting point from which logical explanations of the shared group viewpoints could be hypothesised (Øverland et al., 2012). Our interpretation stage draws together the evidence from the quantitative processes as well as the commentaries and demographic information collected from the participants. First, below we present the consensus items, namely, statements given approximately the same

value by all participants (see Table 3) and which can been said to be generally agreed on by the educators. This is followed with the naming of the four factors drawing together the statements characterising the viewpoint.

[Table 3 about here]

The consensus statements evidenced that educators can help young people get on in life by showing them a wide range of vocational and academic options (statement 25). Participants acknowledged that in some regard, young people would benefit from a greater range of experiences, which would prepare them for the future (statement 9). There were felt to be differences between what students in remote schools want in life and the orientations of urban young people (statement 28). It was agreed that careers for many people in the area were curtailed by the paucity of senior positions available in organisations (statement 5).

Factor 1. Build capacity in staff and students
This viewpoint is characterised by an open mind towards what a fulfilling future can be for young people. Participants defining this were in essence disputing that the responsibility of teachers is to make sure that young people get qualifications for employment (statement 29, z-score -2.04, sort value -4). An exemplar participant for this group encapsulated the motivation, explaining that their goal was to provide: 'a rich and diverse curriculum within a global context'. Teachers can help develop young people's capabilities, such as resilience by using the local natural environment in lessons and activities (7, 1.35, 4). In fact, the view that teachers make a significant difference to the next generation of young people was supported (23, 1.21, 3). Educators

themselves placed value on the fact that they and their colleagues arrive through diverse routes into teaching, not only through top-ranked university programmes (3, -1.61, -3), perhaps acknowledging that people's lives and careers are often not linear and might not work out as originally planned. The valuable input that the school can make for young people regarding their future pathways was through continuing to build the capacity of the staff (18, 1.32, 3).

Factor 2. Know the community

A shared concern was the impacts on the pupils and school staff of the isolated nature of the community. This could be felt as being restrictive in that educators can struggle with the responsibilities of feeling under scrutiny and dealing with their perception that the community is closed off (statement 11, z-score 1.87, sort value 4). The focus of attention regarding young people's futures was not on ensuring that they achieve qualifications (29, -1.63, -3). Notably, one exemplar participant stated, 'Life here is not a meritocracy'. It was deemed important to become attuned with the community and understand its particular society in order to identify and support in appropriate ways the full range of individual student needs (10, 1.74, 3). The idea that the best teachers have graduated from top-ranked universities was rejected (14, -2.48, -4) alongside the claim that effective teachers have to have studied their subject at university (15, -1.55, -3). These perspectives could reflect the requirement that, in a very small school, as typically found in sparsely populated communities, the staff teach across the curriculum and often work in multi-stage classes, with there often being only one or two teaching staff in total.

Factor 3. Spark curiosity for life

Under this group's shared view, it was agreed that schools in peripheral communities face very different situations to their counterparts in other places (statement 16, z-score -1.30, sort value -3). Educators perceive there is a tendency for young people to assume they will follow family traditions when taking up employment (27, 1.87, 4). While this is not necessarily a negative influence, educators are of the opinion that because the community tended to be close knit, it was sometimes difficult to discuss educational issues that need to be addressed (10, -1.4, -3). This could pertain to young people's future pathways and thus, reticence to raising these issues could impede families being aware of other possibilities for their children. One exemplar participant commented that they needed to 'ensure that a child's parents/hometown doesn't limit their future career/life'. The educators believed they need to be realistic in creating aspirations that are appropriate for the locale (26, 1.77, 3) but at the same time, as one participant put it, make young people 'aware of wider issues and options'. Owing to the limited local options, young people might move away post-school. Educators were passionately against labelling any young person who did not stay in a different locale and chose to return 'home' as a drop out or a failure (3, -1.56, -4).

Factor 4. Acknowledge the barriers to finding employment

With this viewpoint, it was strongly believed that educators make a positive difference to the next generation (statement 23, z-score 2.40, sort value 4) and they do not have to have graduated from top-ranked universities (14, -1.73, -3). While teachers can make a difference to young people's future lives, the lack of employment and other opportunities in the region were considered a barrier (8, 1.47, 3) and as exemplar participants for this viewpoint emphasised, staff in school helped with finding work by

providing 'work experience in Year 10' and 'careers assemblies with locals and visiting guests'. This issue connects to the shared concern that young people accessing education or work in distant towns invariably have to leave home to take up such opportunities. As with factor 3, the factor 4 perspective condemned any idea that a student who returns unexpectedly early after taking up a distant opportunity is a failure (3, -1.79, -4). Students who move away as well as those who do not expect to move away, could be wrestling with the anticipation of major uncertainties in the near future. These challenges potentially make the teachers' work complex in both instances. This underscores the viewpoint that not only are there negative impacts arising from the lack of locally available post-school opportunities, but also, that these are to be addressed by students engaging with, as one exemplar participant stated, a range of 'inspirational aspiration opportunities'.

Discussion

When we combined the notion of place (i.e. peripheral coastal communities), with that of aspiration, four considerably different factor viewpoints emerged. We draw on the framework of Zipin et al. (2015) to compare these distinct profiles. As these authors pointed out, it is not appropriate to single out one rationale as entirely shaping an individual's aspirations: these are multi-facetted phenomena. Moreover, we have not unpacked the educators' personal aspirations, but rather, elucidated viewpoints amongst them on the nature of young people's aspirations: what helps to determine young people's aspirations and how educators tend to respond to them.

'Acknowledge the barriers to finding employment' typified by educators in factor 4, centres around the lack of careers locally for young people. Educators raising such concerns urged students to deploy practical strategies (e.g. take career advice and

work experience) backed up by aspirational mind sets. This is consistent with doxic logic, namely, that educators are important influencers on young people's lives and that employment, potentially accessed through a university level education, is the educators' valorised outcome (Department for Education, 2017). Zipin et al. (2015, p. 234) pointed to the limitations of aspirations that are built on logics of this nature: they are 'skin-deep' and rest on 'ideologically articulated messages'. When such messages are at the core of aspirational beliefs, it is highly likely that in the real world many individuals will fall short of attaining their idealised goals. Educators' opinions on their school's ineffectiveness in getting their students worthwhile employment futures appear rooted in attributing blame to the socioeconomically depressed communities in which they are located and to a much lesser degree, to their students having deficient aspirational orientations.

Educators defining 'spark curiosity for life' (factor 3) identified familial influences shaping aspirations, rather than issues such as poor local employment options. Alongside the influence of doxic understandings, Zipin et al. (2015, p. 234) proposed that deeply held dispositions formed in the face of the realities of everyday life can shape aspirations: 'the possibilities-within-limits of given social structural positions'. Habituated aspirations lead young people to anticipate following in the footsteps of family members. This means that the focal educators' students are liable to want to join family run businesses, long established local firms or traditional primary industries typically found in the South West peninsular. In following family traditions, the educators supporting this viewpoint appear to fear that young people might miss out due to a lack of knowledge about alternative futures. While the consensual Q statement confirms that educators introduce students to a range of career and academic futures, with this viewpoint, they are aware of young people's local circumstances and the need

to keep these aspirational futures realistic. In prior scholarship, it has been noted that not all coast-based young people have the backing to pursue a pathway that involves moving away (Shepherd & Hooley, 2016). Moreover, family attitudes towards the younger generation leaving, perhaps never to return, coupled with limited forms of capital, such as those required to navigate living in cities, might stymie this pathway (Wenhan, 2020). However, a range of employment options are arguably negotiable in the locales covered in this study. Corbett and Forsey (2017, p. 441) contended that even in socioeconomically depressed peripheral communities, differential employment can be figured out, because 'at particular moments, and in particular locales, employers demand different things'. While some of these jobs could be less valued from the perspective of metro-centric expectations, they offer realisable pathways. In sum, factor 3 supports the need to be open minded, but pragmatic, when it comes to aspirations in these peripheral communities.

The study elicited two further perspectives: factor 1 named 'build capacity in staff and students', and factor 2 named 'know the community'. An arguably counter intuitive outcome revealed through the Q method with regard to both viewpoints is the rejection of the priority given to achieving qualifications. This stance is surprising in its clear opposition to the touchstone metro-normative expectation that students must obtain qualifications for securing post-school transitions and social mobility (Department for Education, 2017) that appear to be prerequisite in peripheral communities offering few knowledge economy-based future career options. Instead, educators defining both factor viewpoints are in alignment with extant rural scholarship that contends that 'schooling needs to work with that which is familiar to students' (Downes & Roberts, 2015, p. 81) and the pursuit of certain qualifications appears as an example of knowledge that is alien in their settings.

While there are some similarities 'build capacity in staff and students' (factor 1) presents a distinct perspective and stands apart from 'know the community' (factor 2). The former emphasises that educators should endeavour to prepare students who are flexible and equipped for managing an unknown future. This factor 1 perspective supports the notion that young people will have to negotiate disillusion with superficial doxical aspirations and the realisation that habituated expectations are no longer sustainable. However, when educators move beyond the apparent limitations of their locales to help young people build on their lived experiences, value local community knowledges and develop new perspectives regarding their futures, some alternative futures may be imagined. Zipin et al. (2015, p. 236) termed these as forming 'emergent aspirations, grounded in lived-cultural resources'. This hopeful orientation espoused by educators grouped under factor 1 can advocate for use of local community-based capitals (e.g. natural, cultural and human) to build students' capabilities and further recognises that staff require ongoing professional development in new pedagogies to be able to facilitate such aspirations (Reid & Westergaard, 2017; Shepherd & Hooley, 2016).

'Know the community' (factor 2) was pertinent to educators in the smallest communities located immediately on the coast where the vastly unequal distribution of resources is recognised by exemplar participants. In remote close-knit communities, social justice appears unlikely, with a divide between the haves (owners of land, housing/properties and businesses) and have nots (seasonal/casual workers) likely to perpetuate across many generations. The promise that through working hard and adopting 'entrepreneurial and dynamic modes of aspirational citizenship' (Raco, 2009, p. 438) a young person with little behind them will achieve social mobility becomes untenable in such circumstances. Moreover, for those young people undertaking post-

school transitions into thriving family businesses, there seems little urgency to disrupt longstanding habituated pathways. In contrast, for young people without mapped futures, it appears that their post-school transition inevitably involves moving away. This, in itself is a transition that requires resources that are potentially beyond the reach of some families (Bridge Group, 2019; Donnelly & Gamsu, 2018). In light of this seemingly intractable situation, it is unsurprising that an exemplar participant stated with some desperation 'you have to deal with all of that'.

Conclusion

This Q methodology study has identified four potential viewpoints amongst educators that contribute new insights regarding aspirations in peripheral coastal communities in England. Only one of the four viewpoints in our study, by bringing to the fore school practices such as the delivery of careers education and work experience opportunities, appears to have aligned with the discourse that aspirations are necessarily determined around knowledge economy employment trajectories that connote upward social mobility.

This research study was carried out through deploying Q method with the aim of surfacing new perspectives, particularly those that are not immediately accessible to researchers adopting other methodologies. Through this approach, the consensus was confirmed that educators in peripheral places wish to support their students' futures. Moreover, while educators may be working with taken for granted metro-centric discourse, there are other perspectives. We summarise these viewpoints as having a shared concern for social justice, in terms of opening up young people's aspirations for the future, in realistic and supported ways. For educators, deploying in their classrooms grounded knowledges based in local lived worlds and using capitals available in their

communities are potentially avenues toward advancing their students' flourishing and post-school transitions. This potentially has implications for education leaders in other peripheral communities arguably associated with significant socioeconomic disadvantage. Senior sector leaders should not assume that metrocentric agendas will be implemented without question or modification by educators. As revealed in this study, leaders are likely to need to accommodate a range of emergent understandings regarding aspirations and young people. Educators' diverse orientations and commitments to young people's futures can be seen as positive contributions, if viewed in a constructive light.

For this study, the data collection was carried out online. The dispersed population of participants around the coastal region would have been difficult to access had the study not been held remotely. However, this prevented in-depth discussion of participants' Q sorts. Future research will involve interviewing in the focal communities as detailed information could enhance our understanding of each hypothesised viewpoint. In particular, participants could reveal insights about their small settlements that shed light upon the nature of their community settings. This helps mitigate any tendency to homogenise experience in peripheral coastal settlements as we acknowledge that each community has its own context in which young people are imagining their future lives.

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Table 1. Description of the participants.

Participant number	Education role	Distance located from coast	Community population
1	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
2	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
3	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
4	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
5	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Town (11,000-25,000 people)
6	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Town (11,000-25,000 people)
7	Early career teacher	Up to 3 miles	Large town (26,000-50,000 people)
8	Early career teacher	4-6 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
9	Early career teacher	4-6 miles	Small town (6,000-10,000 people)
10	Early career teacher	7-10 miles	Town (11,000-25,000 people)
11	Early career teacher	More than 10 miles	Small town (6,000-10,000 people)
12	Early career teacher	More than 10 miles	Small town (6000-10,000 people)
13	Established teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
14	Established teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
15	Established teacher	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
16	Established teacher	4-6 miles	Small town (6,000-10,000 people)
17	Senior leadership	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
18	Senior leadership	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
19	Senior leadership	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
20	Other	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
21	Other	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
22	Other	Up to 3 miles	Very small town/village (up to 5,000 people)
23	Other	Up to 3 miles	Large town (26,000-50,000 people)

Table 2. Description of factor loadings.

Participant number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
23	**0.75**	0.09	0.03	0.06
21	**0.72**	-0.26	-0.27	0.13
12	**0.69**	<0.01	0.31	0.32
8	**0.61**	0.14	-0.15	0.03
2	**0.60**	0.07	0.02	0.54
9	**0.56**	0.38	0.13	0.34
7	**0.53**	0.05	0.49	0.08
1	-0.15	**0.79**	0.05	-0.13
22	0.08	**0.76**	0.15	0.45
13	0.31	**0.70**	-0.26	-0.05
14	-0.01	**0.66**	-0.10	0.52
17	-0.02	0.19	**-0.68**	0.54
6	0.44	0.04	**0.67**	0.12
5	-0.10	-0.01	**0.61**	0.23
19	-0.13	0.04	**0.55**	0.20
15	0.20	0.17	0.04	**0.84**
3	-0.05	0.16	0.16	**0.75**
4	0.16	0.35	0.01	**0.73**
10	0.36	-0.03	0.16	**0.71**
11	0.45	<0.01	0.29	**0.64**
16	0.52	-0.06	0.13	**0.63**
18	0.07	-0.31	0.34	**0.61**

Participant number	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4
20	0.33	0.51	0.34	0.44
Eigenvalue	7.66	2.86	2.23	1.87
Variance explained (%)	33	12	10	8
Cumulative variance explained (%)	33	46	55	64
Number of defining sorts	7	4	4	7

Note. Statement loadings shown in bold were significant at 0.01.

Table 3: Statements in the Q sample with sort values.

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 4 Rank
1	**The Peninsular is a beautiful natural environment to live in.** (1,2)	**2**	**0**	1	1
2	The experiences of some young people when leaving home to access education or work in distant towns can be stressful and traumatic.	-1	2	-1	3
3	**After moving away from home (for education, training or employment), having to come back early means that a young person has failed to achieve.** (2)	-3	**-2**	-4	-4
4	**The most academically able young people move out of the Peninsular to seek their future.** (1)	**2**	0	1	0
5	*In the Peninsular climbing the career ladder in graduate jobs is blocked by the limited number of senior roles available* (1c,4c)	*0*	1	-1	*0*

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 4 Rank
6	**Dealing with the challenges of the local natural environment (weather, sea) is character building for young people.** (1)	**2**	-1	-1	-1
7	**Young people's resilience improves when the natural environment as used as a positive resource, for example, adventure trips and outdoor activities.** (1)	**4**	0	0	1
8	**Post 16 options are needed locally so that young people do not have to go away from their home town/village.** (3,4)	0	-1	**-2**	**3**
9	*Culturally enriching experiences are needed locally to help young people in modern life e.g. museums, theatre.* (3c)	2	0	2	2
10	**The community is small so families and teachers have friendships with each other which can prohibit people feeling able to raise educational issues that need to be addressed.** (2)	-2	**3**	-3	-2

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 4 Rank
11	**Living within a small community means school staff feel under scrutiny.** (2)	-1	**4**	-1	-1
12	**NQTs make the young people they teach aspire to greater opportunities.** (2,4)	1	**-2**	0	**2**
13	**Teachers are really motivated when they share their passion for the subject/discipline they love.** (3,4)	1	1	**-2**	**2**
14	**The best teachers have done teacher training at the best universities.** (2)	-3	**-4**	-2	-3
15	Teachers work best when they teach the subject they studied at university.	-1	-3	0	-2
16	**Schools in isolated places have to try harder than other schools to recruit good teachers.** (2,4)	-2	**2**	-3	**0**
17	**Teaching in well off places is less hard work than teaching in poor communities' schools.** (4)	-1	0	-1	**-3**

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 4 Rank
18	**Today's teachers need opportunities and the time to study for a masters or higher qualifications.** (1,3)	**3**	-1	**1**	-1
19	**The work-life balance for teachers in the Peninsular is good.** (1)	**1**	-1	0	0
20	To be an effective teacher it is essential to have a mentor whom you feel you can learn from.	0	0	2	2
21	**Locally, our teachers are expected to take on management responsibilities beyond those usually allocated to their job grade.** (1,2)	**0**	**3**	-2	-1
22	Being a teacher is one of the few jobs that gives you status as a professional in this community.	-2	2	2	-2
23	**As a teacher you make a positive difference to the next generation.** (3,4)	3	2	**0**	**4**

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 4 Rank
24	**Locally, young people base their future career pathway on family connections.** (2,3)	0	**1**	**4**	0
25	*Teachers help young people get on in life by showing them a wide range of vocational and academic options.* (2c,4c)	1	*1*	1	*1*
26	**Schools create aspirations in young people that are realistic for living in the Peninsular.** (1,3)	**-2**	-1	**3**	0
27	**Social mobility is a problem relating to pupils on Free School Meals and/or Pupil Premium.** (1)	**1**	-2	0	-1
28	*Teachers understand that what local young people want in life is not always the same as what young people in the city want.* (2c)	0	*1*	2	1
29	**The key responsibility of teachers is to get young people to get qualifications for employment.** (3)	**-4**	-3	**1**	-2

Statement Number	Statement	Factor 1 Rank	Factor 2 Rank	Factor 3 Rank	Factor 4 Rank
30	**Teaching is about being taken out of your comfort zone.** (3,4)	-1	-2	**3**	**1**

Note. NQTs = newly qualified teachers; Distinguishing statements at 0.01 are shown in bold and Consensus statements are shown in italics.

Figure 1: Q sort grid.
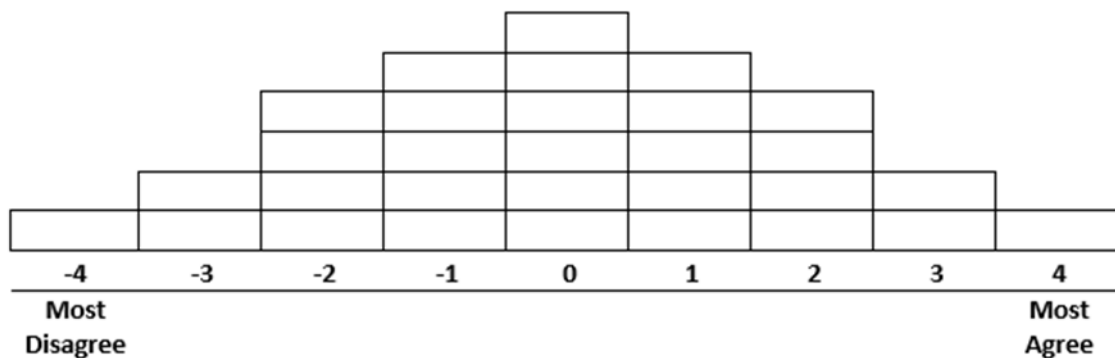
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