**Review of HE student destinations and outcomes data:**

**Third working group meeting**

**Monday 22 February 2016, 11.00am**

**Finlaison House, London, EC4A 1AB**

Paper No: 7

**Measuring Graduate Subjective Well-being Outcomes through DLHE**

Subjective well-being (SWB) is a measure of life quality that complements objective well-being indicators such as life expectancy, level of education attainment and household income. SWB is measured and reported annually by ONS using indicators for Personal Well-being (ONS, 2012) and social capital (Siegler, 2015).

In a pilot study, SWB data was collected from 5,300 Plymouth and Huddersfield graduates as a supplement to the 2011/12 and 2012/13 DLHE survey, using the four ONS Personal Well-being items and a European Social Survey Social Trust item. These items are: *On a scale of zero to ten… (1). Overall, how SATISFIED are you with your life nowadays? (2). Overall, to what extent do you feel the things you do in your life are WORTHWHILE? (3). Overall, how HAPPY did you feel yesterday? (4). Overall, how ANXIOUS did you feel yesterday? (5). Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be TRUSTED, or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?*

## Improving the Student Experience Using the DLHE / SWB Pilot Study Data

Pilot study SWB data highlighted gaps in the student experience which led to the development of SWB interventions. Interest is an essential determinant of self-directed action (Weinstein, et al. 2012). Many students are more interested in the prospect of fulfilment, satisfaction, excitement, happiness, and friendship today, than in working towards graduate-level employment in three years’ time. **Curriculum-based employability interventions** promoted extracurricular life as an opportunity for students to find out by trial and error what feels personally **worthwhile** to them. Attitudes that emerge in **worthwhile** activity (such as curiosity, initiative, risk taking, ingenuity, resilience and drive for results) eclipse skills as determinants of early career performance (Murphy, 2012). Established personality indicators (Briggs Myers and Myers, 1980) and values assessments (Schwartz, 2012) were used to increase students’ self-aware autonomy (Burchardt, et al. 2013), **social capital, trust** and collaboration, by developing positive attitudes to individual difference. Significantly lower graduate SWB scores for some ethnic groups provide an incentive to (1). examine whether students from all cultural traditions and social classes are enabled to participate fully in university life (Stevenson, 2012), and (2). introduce electronic collection of Students Union societies participation data.

**Student performance interventions** were implemented. Students engaged in **worthwhile** extracurricular activities are more motivated to improve their performance (Patrick et al, 2012). Students reviewed SWB scores associated with recent social activities and examined what one thing they could do to improve their score for the following weekend. Spreadsheet-based in-class SWB data collection and visualisation led into reviews of NSS-related activities such as seminars and students’ use of coursework feedback, academic support services and commercial productivity tools such as Covey’s 7 Habits, Tuckman’s team stages etc. as means to improve students’ life-wide **satisfaction**.

**Up-stream scalable student anxiety and autonomy interventions** were developed and implemented. **Anxiety** and hopelessness impede learning in HE (Williams et al., 2015). Students explored whether they preferred activities to be challenging and **worthwhile**, or **happy** and pointless (Baumeister et al., 2013) and compared challenge- and threat-responses to stress. Students examined evidence that pre-performance arousal improves productivity (Brooks, 2012) while it is *the belief that* ***anxiety*** *is harmful* rather than **anxiety** itself that impedes performance and harms health (McGonigal, 2015). The course evaluation reported these interventions helped students develop experimental lives.

Students explored autonomy (Burchardt et al, 2013; Weinstein et al, 2012), hope (Day et al, 2010; Snyder, 2011) and the role of friends, old-timers (Wenger, 1998) and advisers in finding ways to achieve blocked goals and extend their performance development toolkits. Students examined DLHE Q14 / SWB data describing graduates’ main reasons for taking their job. The **worthwhile** and **satisfied** scores for *job fitted my plans*, *job was well paid*, and *only job offer I received* illustrate life-wide employability, life quality and salary income benefits associated with more autonomous, self-aware, values-based occupational choice (Crust and Hicks, 2015). SWB is a tool for intensifying conditions which support the emergence of clubs, societies and less conspicuous self-directing collaborations in campus communities. **Happiness** promotes experimental occupational choice (Holland et al, 2012). A practical working knowledge of values (e.g. Schwartz, 2012), personality (e.g. Briggs Myers and Myers, 1980) and stress (McGonigal, 2015) promotes students’ identification of **worthwhile** objectives (Ryff and Singer, 2008) performance in **satisfying** roles (Hirsh et al., 2003) and positive view of individual difference. SWB supports productive values-based goal-oriented collaboration.

## Why Roll Out Nationally?

By comparison with Computer Science graduates, Education Studies graduates record higher **worthwhile** and **satisfied** scores but lower graduate salaries. SWB complements graduate employment outcome data, and extends universities’ reputation for improving life-wide, life-long life quality - in addition to standard of living. Universities already build the habits of self-directed lives that feel **worthwhile**, **satisfying**, **happy** and **socially connected**, where graduates relish challenge and experience little uninvited **anxiety** earning respectable salaries productively doing what they love in effective authentic styles with like-motivated colleagues. Measuring SWB will extend the capacity of UK HEPs to deliver and sell wellbeing and employability outcomes to prospective UK and international students.

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