Measure learner performance on a scale of one to 10

Can scaling from the OSKAR framework have an impact on student progress? By Andrew Stork and Ben Walker

In our research, we sought to address the difficulty many students have in expressing how they feel they are progressing and were particularly interested in a tool from within solution-focused coaching – scaling.

This is where a student is asked to rate their wellbeing and performance on a scale from one to ten. Our research question was “How does the use of scaling from the OSKAR framework – scaling, know-how and resources, affirm and action and review framework impact upon student progress and emotional wellbeing?”

Test groups involved full-time 16-18 year-old students across a range of vocational subjects areas and levels. Seven and more ‘experimental’ groups and seven were control groups where scaling was not used.

One-to-one conversations were undertaken by the personal tutors over a 12-week period and qualitative data was gathered from questionnaires completed by students at the beginning, middle, and end of this period. Qualitative data was gathered from focus groups carried out by us with all research groups.

The statistical analysis of questionnaires showed no significant difference between the scaling and non-scaling groups in terms of students’ perception of their performance and achievement.

The thematic analysis from the focus groups showed some students felt that scaling in one-to-one conversations helped to clarify their priorities, made it easier to assess their ongoing progress and helped others (personal tutors and teachers) to take action on their behalf.

Students generally found it easier to articulate current progress and self-evaluate their performance through a number of questions rather than through description.

Some students said that scaling helped to improve their confidence and motivation. Other students questioned the reliability of the scale because feelings change daily and that there may be a temptation to make up numbers because they didn’t want to admit weakness. Some felt scaling has less meaning if they are doing well. However, perhaps the most significant finding of the research was the overwhelmingly positive response of students to their experience of one-to-one with their personal tutors. Many had no experience of this type of meeting before and said that they felt better appreciated and motivated. One-to-one meetings made them feel more comfortable and relaxed which meant they could be open and honest in what felt like a two-way conversation with open-minded tutors.

The content of one-to-one helped students to identify areas for development and agree SMART specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-related targets. Some students said that their attendance, behaviour, and time-management also improved as a result. Andrew’s and Ben’s research was supported in 2014-15 by the ETF Research Development Fellowship (RDF) Programme.

ELMAG portal leads the way

Research, resources, a reflective practice tool and a network of peers and potential mentors are all available through the Excellence in Leadership, Management and Governance (ELMAG) portal.

The portal is a one-stop shop for managers, leaders and governors and practitioners seeking to take their first steps on the management and leadership ladder.

The resources section allows users access to resources in areas including leadership and management, technology and maths and English delivery and leading in local areas. Each month there are highlight resources – this month being the government’s Area Reviews. There is also a link to the Excellence Gateway where further resources are available.

A wide range of management, leadership, and governance courses can be accessed via the course finder facility. Users can browse by keyword and theme and there is a special section for those courses subsidised by the Education and Training Foundation. It is also possible to apply for a programme bursary.

The leadership reflection tool can help users identify development needs. The tool is based on a model from the Leadership Conversation Project which was commissioned by the Foundation and run by a range of bodies including the 157 Group, the Association of Employment and Learning Providers and NACE.

There are now more than 450 members of the ELMAG network which allows leaders and teachers to seek and offer support to colleagues in other parts of the sector through informal conversations; joining one of the discussion forums; or setting up you own mentoring arrangements.

Data from the ELMAG portal is provided by the Education and Training Foundation and developed by UCL Institute of Education in partnership with Taster Technologies.