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Note

New insights into ‘how to let them flourish’: Enhancing student well-being through the development of personal resources

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To be successful in higher education, students need to find themselves - emotionally, psychologically and socially - in a state that enables them to reach their potential and be productive. Such a state is commonly referred to as a state of well-being. Well-being is influenced by several factors, including personal resources. Examples of personal resources are optimism, self-esteem, and self-efficacy. These resources are, to some extent, developable.

The dissertation ‘Let them flourish: enhancing higher education student’s well-being’ written by Jolise ‘t Mannetje, fills a gap in current knowledge by identifying personal resources that affect student well-being and investigating how the development of personal resources can be enhanced in higher education. Specifically, the dissertation provides insight into which personal resources honors students perceive to contribute to their educational success. Moreover, Jolise has invited students, teachers, educational directors, and student support staff to share their thoughts on educational activities aimed at helping students to develop those personal resources, resulting in design principles for such activities.

Dissertation

Jolise ‘t Mannetje is part of the research group Innovative and Effective Education at Saxion University of Applied Sciences in the Netherlands. Her research focuses on education for honors students and student well-being in higher education. Her dissertation ‘Let them flourish: enhancing higher education student’s well-being’ is available [here](#).

Part of Jolise's work was previously published in the Journal of the European Honors Council: 't Mannetje, J. E. M. M., Heijne-Penninga, M., Mastenbroek, N. J. J. M., Wolfensberger, M. V. C., & Jaarsma, A. D. C. (2021). [Personal resources conducive to educational success: high achieving students' perspectives](#). Journal of the European Honors Council, 5(1).

Ceremony

Jolise will defend her dissertation in Groningen on March 7th 2023 (00:45 pm CET), supported by family, friends, her promotor prof. dr. A.D.C. Jaarsma (Utrecht University, the Netherlands) and her co-promotors dr. M. Heijne-Penninga (University of Groningen, the Netherlands), dr. J.I.A. Visscher-Voerman (Saxion UAS, the Netherlands), & dr. M.V.C. Wolfensberger (Avans UAS, the Netherlands)

Please find the livestream to the event [here](#). Language: Dutch

Q&A with Jolise 't Mannetje

Your work provides insights into the relationship between personal resources and student well-being. What are the most valuable lessons related to honors education to take away from your dissertation?

Several important lessons can be drawn from my research. First, honors students appear to be quite capable of self-identifying which personal resources are important to them. In the first study included in my dissertation, honors students identified mainly self-directiveness, inquiry mindedness, perseverance, social involvement and motivation. Paying attention to these personal resources can help honors students study successfully. The way in which education can pay attention to the development of personal resources does not yet appear to have been sufficiently researched. In the fourth study, we formulated design principles for designing interventions to further develop four personal resources of honors students. The design principles differ for each personal resource, but some overarching design principles have been formulated: the intervention should combine group and individual activities, students should be taught basic skills to be able to direct their own development, interventions need to have an ongoing character or need to consist of recurring activities. In addition, we recommend doing more educational design research in order to develop interventions in a thorough way, try them out and gain further knowledge and insights into their effects and how they work. The first steps have been taken by understanding which personal resources are most important in the honors context and how interventions can be designed to further develop these personal resources. But follow-up research is certainly recommended.

In your dissertation you describe a study that focuses on finding out which personal resources affect engagement and stress among students. The study was performed in 'regular' education. What are the main outcomes and what would you think the outcomes would have been if you had investigated this among honors students?

Indeed, in the study described in Chapter 3, we examined, through path analysis, which personal resources among a broad student population were most strongly associated with subdimensions of engagement and stress. Optimism, hope and motivation were found to be

most strongly associated with subdimensions of engagement. Optimism and hope were most strongly associated with subdimensions of stress. In addition, the newly examined personal resource inquiry mindedness was found to be associated with all subdimensions of engagement.

Although we did not examine it specifically, I do not expect major differences between honors students and non-honors students. After all, honors students are also 'ordinary' students in higher education. However, the way in which personal resources can be further developed could possibly differ somewhat. Because honors students were found to be more critical and pro-active in previous studies (Banis-Den Hertog, 2016; Huijts & Kolster, 2020), among other things, the further development of, for instance, self-regulation and inquiry mindedness might differ somewhat. Because honors education generally has to deal with fewer regulations and guidelines than bachelor education, I see it mainly as an opportunity that in honors education interventions can probably be tried out more easily and on a shorter term.

What questions related to personal resources and student well-being remain and why is it important to answer them?

I would definitely recommend much more research on developing personal resources, and student well-being in general. In any case, the aforementioned educational design research based on the design principles we formulated would be valuable. This would allow interventions to be developed and tested.

In addition, further research could focus on the balance between different types of resources and demands, as personal resources are not the only important factor. An integrated approach to student well-being, in particular, is recommended. This should certainly not avoid the discussion of who is responsible for student well-being, the individual student or the educational system.

Strengthening student well-being, by further developing personal resources or in other ways, can contribute to increased student success.

References

Banis-Den Hertog, J. H. (2016). X-factor for innovation: identifying future excellent professionals. University of Twente, Enschede.

Huijts, T., & Kolster, R. (2020). Excellence programmes in higher education: selection of students, effects on students, and the broader impact on higher education institutions. Introduction to the special issue. *European Journal of Higher Education*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/21568235.2020.1850310>