



‘What works’ in widening participation? Applying the NERUPI Framework to undertake a local impact evaluation of the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect Programme

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Abstract

This evaluative research paper explores key elements of current policy and practice within widening participation in the English higher education sector, focussing on the Office for Students'-funded Uni Connect programme. There is an analysis of theories which are used to underpin both widening participation outreach design and evaluation, followed by the introduction of the NERUPI Framework, which synthesises theory and practitioner expertise in a reflexive evaluation cycle. The evaluative elements of the study focus on evidencing the impact of the Uni Connect Programme in York & North Yorkshire, known as FutureHY, to date. A theory of change and the NERUPI Bourdieu-informed evaluation framework are utilised to undertake evaluation of three significant FutureHY outreach interventions, along with analysis of overarching qualitative responses from school and college staff. Undertaken in the context of the Covid-19 pandemic and associated school and university closures, the study relies on the use of secondary datasets and the examination of related reports to measure local impact through a contribution analysis. Findings suggest positive short to medium-term outcomes for participants relating to the five NERUPI pillars; *Know, Choose, Become, Practise, and Understand*. This evidence indicates FutureHY interventions are enabling participants to overcome perceived barriers to higher education, which lays the foundation for future studies tracking participation in the Uni Connect Programme through to HE enrolment.

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List of Abbreviations

APP	Access and Participation Plan
BAME	Black and Minority Ethnic (groups)
FE	Further Education
HE	Higher Education
HEFCE	Higher Education Funding Council, England
HERA	Higher Education Research Act (2017)
LEP	Local Enterprise Partnership(s)
NCOP	National Collaborative Outreach Programme (now known as Uni Connect)
NECOP	North East Collaborative Outreach Programme
NERUPI	Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions
NNCO	National Networks for Collaborative Outreach
NSP	National Scholarship Programme
OFFA	Office for Fair Access
Ofs	Office for Students
POLAR	Participation of Local Areas (Data)
RCT	Randomised Control Trial
TASO	Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education
UCAS	Universities and Colleges Admissions Service
WP	Widening Participation

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'What works' in widening participation? Applying the NERUPI Framework to undertake a local impact evaluation of the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect Programme

1 Introduction

...it should be an objective of policy to see that those groups who are currently under-represented in higher education come to be properly represented: as participation increases so it must widen.

NCIHE, 1997, p.106.

1.1 The policy context

Despite explicit policy efforts in England over the past fifty years (Stevenson, 2018), it was not until the Dearing report of 1997 (NCIHE) that an agenda of widening participation (WP), which actively promoted participation of those who had 'routinely been excluded' from higher education (HE), began to gather pace. The underrepresented groups targeted by WP policy included those from lower socioeconomic groups, disabled learners, and those from black and minority ethnic (BAME) backgrounds (Smith, 2012, p.101). Over the past two decades, in the United Kingdom, the government has funded a number of WP initiatives designed to address inequalities within the HE sector (Hayton, 2018). One key criticism of historic programmes, particularly the Aimhigher programme which ran from 2004 to 2011, centres around evaluation. It was difficult to ascertain from the evidence captured whether participation in the Aimhigher programme played a role in informing learner's decisions around HE (Smith, 2012). Nevertheless, Aimhigher paved the way for future government-funded collaborative outreach programmes led by universities, such as the National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO, 2015-2017) and the Uni Connect Programme (formally known as the National Collaborative Outreach Programme, NCOP) launched in January 2017 (Rainford, 2019).

In late 2016 the government identified 997 geographical wards in England where progression to higher education (HE) is lower than expected, given average GCSE results (Office for

Students, 2020a). These have been allocated as ‘target’ wards for the Uni Connect Programme and allocated between 29 geographically clustered ‘partnerships’, which generally consist of multiple HE providers in each area (including universities and further education (FE) colleges which also provide HE). Each partnership is based at a lead institution with funding proportionate to the number of ‘target’ learners living within the partnership’s designated wards. Uni Connect team structures and programme delivery are devolved, subject to approval of an operational plan submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) (Tazzyman *et al.*, 2018). Ten of the identified wards are in North Yorkshire and it is the responsibility of the York and North Yorkshire Uni Connect consortia, based at York St John University, to deliver interventions with young people in school years 9-13 living in these wards, with the aim of increasing HE progression rates amongst those living in low participation areas.

1.2 My own relationship with the research

I am currently employed as the Monitoring and Evaluation Officer for FutureHY, the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect partnership. The role’s responsibilities include tracking participants throughout the programme, using the Higher Education Access Tracker (HEAT), and undertaking and reporting on evaluations relating to the programme. Prior to this position in evaluation I have been employed as a Widening Participation Officer (a practitioner role) on both the Uni Connect Programme and the earlier National Network for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO) across Yorkshire and the Humber region. A key expectation from the OfS for the Uni Connect programme is that interventions are appropriately evaluated to evidence the local impact of the project and to build a national evidence base of ‘what works’ in widening participation (Office for Students, 2020b) and this is a focal point of my role.

As an evaluator on the Office for Students’ Uni Connect Programme, I have undertaken numerous evaluations of the interventions designed and delivered by FutureHY, utilising the Bourdieu-informed NERUPI (Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions) evaluation framework. My previous experience as a practitioner on this

programme (and others which were similar), enabled me to witness the development of knowledge, skills and confidence in the young people who were engaged in the programme.

These two roles had garnered experience of both theory and practice, yet there was a clear potential to synthesise the two when reflecting on the success of the FutureHY Programme.

It was clear that a piece of evaluative research seeking to evidence the impact of the programme would not only aid my personal and professional development, but provide the FutureHY Uni Connect team with tangible evidence of the outcomes their work was yielding. This inspired the development of a study which pieced together fundamental aspects of my experiences as an outreach practitioner and programme evaluator for Uni Connect. This brought together the overarching policy context with the operational aspects involved in programme design, delivery, and evaluation, which were grounded in a theoretically informed framework. The resulting product is an evaluative study with a focus on analysing outcome data with a clear understanding of the rationale and educational theory applied when designing the programme and defining its' objectives.

It is anticipated that this study will be the basis for future research undertaken in both my professional and academic capacities to evidence the impact of WP outreach and to establish 'what works' in widening participation.

1.3 WP Evaluation: The Challenge

Burke (2018) highlights a 'growing demand' for evidence of impact, something which is focal in the work of the OfS. This does not come without its' challenges as evaluation in WP is a contested field with little consensus on preferred methodologies.

In an effort to provide clear evidence of impact, 'cause and effect' approaches to evaluation have been championed as the most rigorous. However, in the complex context of WP...it is questionable whether attribution of change related to a specific activity will be possible.

Evaluators must navigate both ethical and practical factors on their journey to evidencing impact, which in turn may limit research design options. When 'seeking to assess the outcome of a programme' evaluators 'often discover that people hold different opinions about what constitutes a successful outcome' (Posavac, 2016, p.8). Complexities in measuring success are evident in the OfS amending outcome targets from Phase One to Phase Two of the Uni Connect Programme. The NCOP/Uni Connect Programme was originally commissioned by the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) to contribute to the achievement of the dual goals to double the proportion of disadvantaged young people going into HE and to increase by 20% the number of students from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) backgrounds by 2020 (Office for Students, 2019, p.9). The second Phase of the project (Aug 2019 onwards) saw the introduction of revised, much more nuanced targets to:

- Reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups
- Support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education
- Support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners
- Contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

Office for Students, 2020a.

As this paper is aiming to evaluate the impact of the entirety of the programme, it is the Phase Two objectives which will be focal, as these are expected to remain in place until July 2021 when the Uni Connect funding is currently due to end (subject to review). The complexities of defining what 'success' might look like will be explored during the literature review and methodology sections, through the introduction of a theoretically underpinned evaluation framework.

1.4 A brief overview of current theory and research relevant to WP

As expected, with the increased policy focus on WP over the past two decades, there has also been growth in widening participation as a research area. Earlier work of this period (such as Thomas, 2001) viewed WP as a response to perceptions that those from under-represented or ‘disadvantaged’ groups lacked aspiration to progress to higher education (Crockford, 2017). More recent academic work (such as Gorard *et al.*, 2012 and Hayton, 2018) has critiqued this ‘deficit’ approach, ‘by bringing the focus back to the socio-economic systems and power relationships that produce inequalities’ (Hayton, 2018, p.36). The rejection of a deficit approach is often informed by Bourdieu’s (1986) concepts of capital, broken down into three ‘fundamental species’; economic capital, cultural capital and social capital (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992 and Hayton, 2018 p.36). Economic capital refers to financial wealth and access to resources whereas cultural capital (experiences, knowledge, and connections) highlights complexities within power relations as certain types of cultural capital hold more value within society (Smith, 2012). Social capital is ‘accrued through social networks, the family and wider community interactions’ (Hart, 2012, p.52). In addition to capital, the *Field* and *Habitus*, ‘thinking tools’ also central to Bourdieu’s work, are also adopted by contemporary WP researchers when exploring underrepresentation in HE (Costa and Murphy, 2015). The concept of field is rooted in the French term ‘le champ’ used to describe ‘an area of land, a battlefield and a field of knowledge’ (Thompson, 2008 cited in Hart, 2012 p.56). In the field of higher education (or to break down further; access to higher education) it becomes evident that certain types of capital hold more value. This includes economic capital for funding, cultural capital (often a defining part of a UCAS personal statement, such as travel or cultural experiences). *Habitus* is a complex tool consisting of an individual’s ‘internalised behaviours and beliefs’ (Costa & Murphy, 2015, p.3). Habitus relates to identities, a person’s history, and interacts with the concept of field. Ingram and Abrahams (2016) have examined this relationship and how an individual’s habitus is ‘interrupted’ when operating in an ‘unfamiliar field’ (cited in Hayton, 2018 p.44).

1.5 An evaluation framework

The NERUPI convenor, Hayton (2018) (along with Bengry-Howell), has drawn on Bourdieu's thinking tools, along with Freire's concept of *praxis*, which could be broadly defined as theory and practice combined; 'the process of taking action in practice whilst acting within a theoretical framework of thought' (Quinlan, 2012). The synthesis of these approaches was a core feature of the Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI). This has led to the development of the NERUPI framework, an evaluation tool seeking to maximise the impact of WP evaluations in three ways:

1. a robust theoretical and evidence-based rationale for the types of intervention that are designed and delivered;
2. clear aims and learning outcomes for interventions, which enable more strategic and reflexive design and delivery ideal for mixed methods evaluation;
3. an integrated evaluation process across multiple interventions to improve data quality, effectiveness and impact

NERUPI Network, 2019.

The practical application of the NERUPI framework will be explored in the methodology section as a tool for evaluating the impact of the Uni Connect York & North Yorkshire Programme.

Widening participation impact evaluation is at the forefront of the OfS' current policy initiative, the Uni Connect Programme, along with individual institutions' Access and Participation Plan (APP) work (Office for Students, 2020c). In January 2020, the recently formed Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) published a review of existing evidence on the impact of WP interventions (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020). This review is a key piece of the current literature, critiquing 92 published evaluation reports of a variety of WP interventions such as summer schools, mentoring and 'black box interventions' (often 'umbrella' programmes consisting of a number of different intervention types). The review found:

- Evidence often does not demonstrate causality
- A lack of evidence of impact of interventions on longer term outcomes (such as HE enrolment)
- Limited conclusions on the impact of the individual components of a ‘black box’ intervention

Adapted from Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020, p.5.

As previously highlighted, there are concerns about the implications of trying to draw conclusions on ‘cause and effect’ (Hayton and Stevenson, 2018). These potential conflicts of approach will be explored in relation to the TASO report during the literature review and methodology sections.

1.6 Undertaking the impact evaluation

Following a comprehensive review of the literature and a detailed commentary of the evaluation methodology, this paper will draw on the recent TASO findings and recommendations in relation to evidencing impact to measure the ‘success’ of the Uni Connect Programme in York & North Yorkshire to date. Utilising a theory of change and the NERUPI Bourdieu-informed evaluation framework, a suite of York & North Yorkshire’s interventions will be evaluated to measure local impact through a contribution analysis. This mixed method approach will include secondary data (from FutureHY, the North Yorkshire Uni Connect Partnership) including pre and post intervention surveys, and qualitative responses from both participants and stakeholders such as teachers and school/college staff.

When initially planning this evaluation project, it was envisaged that primary data could be gathered through interviews with participants and teachers, and potentially a quantitative survey to capture learner attitudes and intentions. Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent school closures, the majority of spring and summer term WP interventions in 2020 were cancelled. This not only reduced the number of interventions initially intended to analyse in this project, it also greatly restricted access to participants for

data. It is noted that teachers have been obliging in their email responses to correspondence from the FutureHY team, but some reported variable contact levels with their students, making implementation of online WP interventions low in their priorities at this time. It would have been extremely difficult to engage research participants for the initial project and as, not only a researcher and evaluator but a student myself, there were ethical concerns about asking probing questions about an individual's thoughts and intentions regarding their future at such an uncertain and unprecedented time.

1.7 The structure of this dissertation

The following evaluative research paper is structured by first examining current literature in the field of widening participation. This includes an exploration of WP policy in order to situate the context of this evaluation study, followed by an analysis of theories which are used to underpin both WP outreach design and evaluation. This will lead to the introduction of the NERUPI Framework, which synthesises theory and practitioner expertise in a reflexive evaluation cycle. Existing studies will then be introduced to demonstrate policy enactment and the practical utilisation of WP theory before a conclusion which summarises the argument for utilising a framework with a strong theoretical underpinning to evaluate the impact of WP policy-based interventions.

The evaluative study on the impact of the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect Programme will then be developed in the methodology section. This will explore the philosophical paradigm of the study and examine the application of the NERUPI evaluation framework before analysing the methods utilised in this study. The methodology section will also detail the validity and reliability of the study along with ethical considerations.

The evidence and analysis element of this study will introduce secondary data from evaluation reports for three key WP interventions designed and delivered by FutureHY, the Uni Connect Partnership for York and North Yorkshire. Analysis will be undertaken, mapping outcomes

against FutureHY's NERUPI-informed Progression Framework (Appendix A.) using success indicators developed for this study to assess the impact of each intervention. Outcomes of these interventions will then be examined collectively to determine whether the FutureHY programme has been successful in meeting the objectives set by the Office for Students for the Uni Connect Programme by enabling participants to develop the types of habitus and capital defined in the NERUPI framework. Overarching qualitative data, provided by teachers in schools participating in the programme, will also be examined when synthesizing the data from the individual interventions to form an evaluation of the wider impact of the FutureHY programme.

The conclusion will summarize the findings of this study, drawing on both the strengths and areas for further exploration, laying the foundations for future studies in this area. The contribution to knowledge this study has made will be discussed, along with potential implications for theory, practice and policy. The paper will conclude that the FutureHY Uni Connect Programme is yielding positive outcomes for participants, but, as outlined by TASO (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020) further research is required to conclude on the longer terms outcomes (HE progression) and to potentially attribute causality. It is acknowledged, however, that this in itself would require a feasibility study to see whether causality can, in fact be established in this setting.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This study aims to explore the current practice within WP, drawing on this knowledgebase to undertake an impact evaluation of the Uni Connect Programme in York & North Yorkshire. The evaluation will adopt the NERUPI framework as an evaluation tool, therefore a key aspect of this literature review will be to examine the underpinning theory behind this framework.

Prior to the exploration of theoretical literature and texts considering practical applications of theory, recent and current policy documents will be examined. This will enable a contextualisation of both theory and practice within the current policy setting. This section of the review will primarily consist of national policy documents within either the United Kingdom as a whole or England, as only the English HE system is overseen by the OfS (Higher Education Research Act, 2017). *The Higher Education Research Act of 2017* (HERA) prompted the inauguration of the Office for Students (OfS), the regulatory body for HE in England and the funder of the Uni Connect Programme. This act, along with OfS guidelines specific to Uni Connect will form an integral aspect of the policy review as they dictate the conditions in which the Uni Connect Programme is operating.

Following on from the policy review, foundational theories relating to under-representation in the field of higher education will be presented and analysed. This will draw heavily on the work of Pierre Bourdieu and subsequent applications, critique, and interpretation of his key concepts: *capital, habitus and field*. This will create a basis on which the literature concerning the NERUPI evaluation framework can be introduced and examined. Whilst the technical application of the framework will be developed later, in the methodology section, it is fundamental to understand the conceptual underpinning of the programme theory as this informed not only the programme design but determined the evaluation criteria utilised in this project.

Existing studies exploring these theoretical and practical elements will then be introduced. This includes the OfS' national Phase 1 report, summarising the Uni Connect Programme from January 2017 – July 2019 (Bowes *et al.*, 2019), and a recent joint review of WP evaluation methodologies by the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes in Higher Education (TASO) and the Education Policy Institute (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020).

Finally, a summarising section situating this paper within the known literature explored during this review will be presented before a conclusion which will acknowledge the benefits of

adopting a framework with strong theoretical basis. The literature review will also conclude, however, with an understanding of the lack of consensus in how the interpretation of ‘thinking tools’, such as Bourdieu’s, can be systematically applied, particularly in a field which is seeing increased calls for ‘rigorous, causal evaluation’ (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020, p.20).

2.2 Contemporary Widening Participation Policy

2.2.1 Contextualizing the study in key reports: Robbins & Dearing

“The higher education system in the UK is highly stratified.” (Hayton & Stevenson, 2018, p.1.) and addressing the under-representation of certain groups in the field of higher education (HE) has been subject to policy considerations for over fifty years. The Robbins Higher Education Report (1963) is considered to be the first wide-scale report researching the HE sector (Williams, 2014). This report was a catalyst for “...influential research-based proactive policy analyses...” including research studies by educational economists on human capital and papers by sociologists “...exploring the role of HE in promoting upward social mobility and its effects on social equity.” (Williams, 2014).

Human capital theory brought about a significant increase of public funding of higher education and prompted the growth of the sector in the years that followed. At the time of the Robbins Report there were only 21 universities in England; this number had grown to 165 by 2009 (Smith, 2012), with seven of those new institutions founded in the early to mid-1960’s. Whilst the Robbins Report is often credited for being the bearer of these changes, report contributor David Willetts reflected in 2013 that “mass expansion of higher education was already well under way by the time the Robbins committee concluded their work” (p.9). Nonetheless, the report is considered as a turning point, with the then Conservative Government accepting all of Robbins’ conclusions in full, solidifying the concept of a *national* higher education sector. There was, however, no explicit recommendations in the 1963 report about how HE participation could be increased in groups who were most underrepresented (or ‘*disadvantaged*’) (Smith 2012).

It was not until the Dearing Report *Higher Education in the Learning Society* (1997) that “the sentiment for change became more apparent” (Smith, 2012, p.101). The Dearing Report is widely considered “a document that ignited a wide range of WP activity and policy” (Thompson, 2017). In his wide-reaching report, Dearing conceptualised a higher education system with a strong connection (or ‘compact’) between local and regional communities and their universities and emphasised widening participation and greater diversity amongst the student population (Thompson, 2017). This was the bedrock for the number of WP policy initiatives in the years that followed.

2.2.2 Policy & national widening participation initiatives

Of the post-Dearing WP policy initiatives, “The most notable national initiative was Aimhigher, introduced in England in 2004 under the New Labour government and funded by HEFCE” (Hayton & Stevenson 2018, p.2). This programme ran for 7 years and primarily focussed on increasing (and widening) access to HE. Aimhigher saw the development of numerous activities, principally aimed at young people from underrepresented groups, designed to encourage progression to HE (Hayton & Stevenson, 2018). In 2009-10 over one million young people participated in Aimhigher activities, such as HE campus visits and summer schools. Evaluation, however, was limited and, of the evaluations that were undertaken, many pointed to “mixed success” (Smith, 2012, p.104). Chilosi *et. al.* (2010) suggested that data indicated the programme had a positive impact on HE progression, but the evaluation data was not sufficient to demonstrate causality. The lack of rigorous evaluation made it difficult to measure the success of the programme. Other criticism of Aimhigher and other early WP initiatives was that they are “too narrowly focused on simplistic notions of “raising aspirations”, which are embedded in discourses of individualism, meritocracy and neoliberalism” (Burke, 2006, p.730). This deficit approach, which views participants as ‘lacking’ in certain attitudes or characteristics will be further explored with the introduction of Bourdieu and the NERUPI framework. Aimhigher ended in 2011 as a result of government funding cuts.

In 2012, the government trebled maximum tuition fees in England to £9000 per year whilst restructuring existing loan and grant packages for students. Alongside this was the introduction of the National Scholarship Programme (NSP). Government investment was match funded by Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and provided non-repayable financial assistance to those with an assessed household income below £25,000 per annum (exact eligibility criteria, beyond this, was set by the individual institutions). The NSP consisted of a tuition fee reduction and scholarship money paid directly to the student and during the first year of the programme the sector invested £416.6 million on the scheme. However, the “capacity of individual HEIs to support low-income students was constrained by the number of low-income students they typically attracted” (Clark and Hordosy, 2018 p.355). This resulted in disparity amongst the sector, with institutions which typically attracted more students from lower income households (through lower entry tariff and/or geographical location) being required to spread their funding more widely across the eligible student population (Clark & Hordosy, 2018). This in turn meant that the most economically deprived students may have received less financial support through the NSP than their peers attending a higher tariff institution.

Late 2014 saw a return to a more collaborative widening participation approach with the introduction of the National Networks for Collaborative Outreach (NNCO). The scheme, funded by HEFCE, saw collaborative delivery of outreach activity across England through 38 networks (34 regional plus four national), consisting of a total of approximately 300 HEIs (including universities and colleges) plus other stakeholders, such as Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). The NNCO ran from December 2014 to December 2016 and received £22million funding. The evaluation of this project led to a number of recommendations, such as the development of programme frameworks and theories of change, which were adopted in the development of NNCO’s successor; the National Collaborative Outreach Programme, now known as Uni Connect (Stevenson et al, 2017).

2.2.3 The research site for this study: Uni Connect Programme

Introduced in January 2017, Uni Connect (then known as NCOP, The National Collaborative Outreach Programme) consists of 29 partnerships in England (Office for Students, 2020a). Each partnership is made up of universities, colleges and other local stakeholders and delivers a variety of widening participation outreach interventions to young people in school years 9-13. Partnerships vary in size and make-up, depending on the number of the 997 Uni Connect target wards they are allocated to work in (and total number of target students) as well as the number of higher education institutions within their locality. Target wards are identified based on POLAR (Participation of Local Areas) data, which recognises areas where HE participation is low given GCSE results. FutureHY, the York & North Yorkshire programme is responsible for 10 target wards (approximately 2500 target learners) and is made up of 3 universities and 6 HE in FE colleges. This is a relatively small partnership in contrast to others such as the North East Collaborative Outreach Programme (NECOP), for example, which consists of five universities and seventeen partner colleges with over ninety allocated target wards (North East Collaborative Outreach Programme, 2018). Funding from the Office for Students is allocated proportionately based on the number of target learners residing in each partnership's target wards.

The first phase of the programme began in January 2017 and ran until July 2019 and aimed to:

...support the government's social mobility goals by rapidly increasing the number of young people from underrepresented groups who go into higher education. Partnerships focused their work on local areas where higher education participation is lower than might be expected given the GCSE results of the young people who live there.

The Office for Students, 2020a.

Phase two then launched on 1 August 2019 and is due to end in July 2021. Building on phase one, the Office for Students states that this phase of the programme aims to:

- Reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups.
- Support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education.
- support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners.
- Contribute to a stronger evidence base around ‘what works’ in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

Office for Students, 2020a.

The need to contribute towards the ‘what works’ evidence base creates a basis for this evaluation project. Whilst it is too early in the programme to draw on progression data to assess any advances on the reduction of progression gaps, there is potential to measure the impact of the work undertaken on aspects such as supporting students to make informed decisions. With limited prior evidence in the ‘what works’ debate, Uni Connect Partnerships drew on theoretical groundings when developing both their project plans and theories of change. It is these theories which can be ‘tested’ using the evaluation methodologies to assess the contribution the Uni Connect Programme has made to participants’ knowledge and intentions about their futures.

2.3 Key Theoretical Debates in Widening Participation

2.3.1 Bourdieu – Capital, Habitus and Field

FutureHY, amongst several other Uni Connect Partnerships, have adopted the NERUPI Bourdieu-grounded evaluation framework to design and evidence the impact of their local programmes. Bourdieu’s concepts of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* have been utilised in widening participation for over two decades (see: Archer & Hutchings, 2000 and Byrom, 2009). Writing

in 1988 Bourdieu introduced these concepts as ‘thinking tools’ with a broad scope, aiming to “uncover the most deeply buried structures of the different social worlds” along with the “mechanisms that tend to ensure their reproduction” (Reay, 2004, p.431). Bourdieu’s pivotal understanding of power differentials between social groups enables a more objective understanding of cultural differences.

The inclusion of power allows us to circumvent the trap of understanding educational disparities through a ‘deficit model’, where individuals are deemed responsible for their perceived failures and lack of certain capacities.

Hayton & Bengry-Howell, 2016, p.43.

Bourdieu’s theoretical approach, which proponents claim avoids such a deficit model, has gained traction in the field of widening participation over recent years. It sees a move away from concepts of ‘raising aspirations’ and other attitudes which assume students are lacking in areas such as work ethic, ambition or knowledge. Instead focussing on the *types* of knowledge and other attributes which are most valued by those who have power within a particular field. Bathmaker *et al.* (2013) refer to the acquisition of these valued capitals (knowledge and skills) by middle and working-class students as ‘recognising and playing the game’. The use of the term ‘game’ represents the complexities in the idea of wider class mobilisation. Each game is different: the structure, the rules, and the target audience. Understanding the context within which one is operating is essential, and this is evident in Bourdieu’s concept of *field*.

Field, for Bourdieu, is not unlike the usage of the English word in phrases such as ‘the field of veterinary medicine’ or ‘field of cyber-security’. These are areas in which “those with privilege are in a stronger position to define what is valuable” (Hayton, 2018, p.37). There may be dominant values within one field which are not relevant in another, which is why this concept is an integral element, along with capital and habitus. This research is focussed on the field of widening participation (specifically access to higher education), an area with its’ own rules

and regulations. An example of this is university entry criteria, not only through exam results, but by personal statement and sometimes interview enables HEIs to take the role of 'gatekeeper', often to maintain a reputation of prestige or exclusivity of the institution (Hayton, 2018). It is important to acknowledge, however, that the field of WP extends long before the HE application and admissions processes can begin, formally, through work with young children about knowledge and intentions for their future. As the Uni Connect programme being evaluated in the study works with students in school years 9-13, this helps broadly define the field in which this study is operating and in turn helps determine the focus on specific types of capital which hold value within this arena.

Capital is a complex concept, in that it can be spread across all aspects of ones' life from monetary wealth, social networks and experiences, for example. Capital is often misinterpreted as purely an economic factor but, for Bourdieu it is much more:

It is in fact impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless one reintroduced capital in all its forms and not solely in the one form recognized by economic theory.

1986, p.15.

Whilst economic capital can be seen to influence educational progression, be this through private education and tuition to ensure meeting entry grades or through investment in extra-curricular activities etc., these experiences in themselves generate both social and cultural forms of capital. In this respect, the term capital refers to different experiences, knowledge and connections which are each valued differently within society (Smith, 2012).

Bourdieu's other form of capital is social capital. He defines this as:

...the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group.

1986, p.21.

Whilst it may be straightforward to liken social capital to the well-known phrase 'it's not what you know but who you know', Bourdieu's concept is much more complex and nuanced. One measure used to define a 'widening participation student' is often whether they are the first generation to enter HE. If your parents, and others within your network, have been through the system they can transfer knowledge about what is valued within that field. This insight a first-generation student may find more difficult to access.

It is evident that, whilst these different elements of capital have distinct definitions, they interweave in a complex manner. One's social capital may lead to access to elements of cultural capital, such as museum visits or access to certain reading materials. It cannot be ignored that many of these also require economic capital to gain access. Whilst WP initiatives can provide access to resources and experiences that build these types of capital, it must be acknowledged how these impact on a person as a whole and how many factors can shape an individual. And this is where Bourdieu's final concept – habitus – comes into play.

Habitus is a lesser known, and probably the most contested, of Bourdieu's concepts. It 'becomes active' in relation to a field (Reay, 2004, p.432). Habitus consists of internalised behaviours, perceptions and beliefs carried by individuals. It is more than lived experiences but an ever-growing structure embodying values, actions, and social positions. Habitus can be an "agent of continuity and tradition" but also "a force for change" (Costa & Murphy, 2015 p.4). In the field of progression to HE, this could be seen in attitudes that deem university as 'a waste of time and money'. An experience at a summer school, for example, builds on existing habitus and may alter a participant's perceptions about university perhaps valuing the personal development opportunities or graduate employability. Reay (2004) highlights

habitus as a multi-layered concept comprising not only of one's individual history and experience "but also...the whole collective history of family and class that the individual is a member of (p.434). A recent example of this combination of both individual and collective historical experience can be demonstrated as a central feature of the growing Black Lives Matter movement (Hoffman, 2017).

Bourdieu's concepts were not meant to be used solely as theory, but rather as theory-method. He wanted to bridge the divide between theory and practice (Costa & Murphy, 2015, p.3). By understanding the types of capital within respective fields, valued by those who hold power, interventions can be developed to enable participants to obtain capitals and, through new experiences, alter their habitus. This introduces the practical application of Bourdieusian theory by developing activities which enable, as oppose to assuming deficit.

2.3.2 Freire's concept of Praxis

Freire's (1972) concept of praxis is a theoretical tool combining theory and practice. Utilised in the field of widening participation, it acknowledges the benefits of being informed by the expertise of the practitioners, who have experience on the ground of programme design and delivery, alongside learnings from academic research into the reasons for underrepresentation of certain groups in the HE sector (Hayton, 2018). Sociological approaches, such as Bourdieu's "have made major contributions to understanding the reproduction of inequalities in education" however there has been "frustration from both within and outside the discipline... concerns have been expressed that critical work can feel removed from everyday reality" (Archer *et al.*, 2018). The use of Freire's (1972) notion of praxis complements Bourdieu's concepts as it "enacts the theory in practice, combining reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it". By integrating both approaches into an evaluation framework, there is equal value on both theory and practitioner experience. Overreliance on theory may result in lack of practitioner engagement with concepts they feel are not relevant for their work. It also can result in stagnation, with theory as a historical concept, and no development based on experiential learning. In contrast, sole reliance on practice-based approaches risk repetition based on perpetuating assumptions. If

a practitioner believes their intervention/programme etc. is successful they will continue to deliver it as so, without development. Together, as praxis, theory and practice provide a sphere in which promotes a critical and reflective action research approach, with space to evaluate and make changes based on practitioner experience and theory-informed indicators.

2.4 From Theory to Evaluation Framework: Introducing NERUPI

The Network for Evaluating and Researching University Participation Interventions (NERUPI) framework has built on a growing body of research into the influence of cultural factors on HE progression. In the development of the framework, praxis, the concept of Paolo Freire, was combined with Bourdieu's 'toolbox' of capital, habitus, and field. NERUPI convenor, Annette Hayton, explained that:

While Bourdieu's theories are useful in explaining how cultural differences translate to structural inequalities at a societal level, he does not set out to recommend practical strategies for change or address individual processes for developing and mobilizing capital.

2018, p.35.

The coalition of theory and praxis "emphasizes the dialogic relationship between critical reflection and critical action" (Burke & Lumb, 2018, p.17). Experiences of those with practical knowledge are embedded within the framework and regularly reviewed as part of a reflexive cycle.

Action research reflective cycle for WP

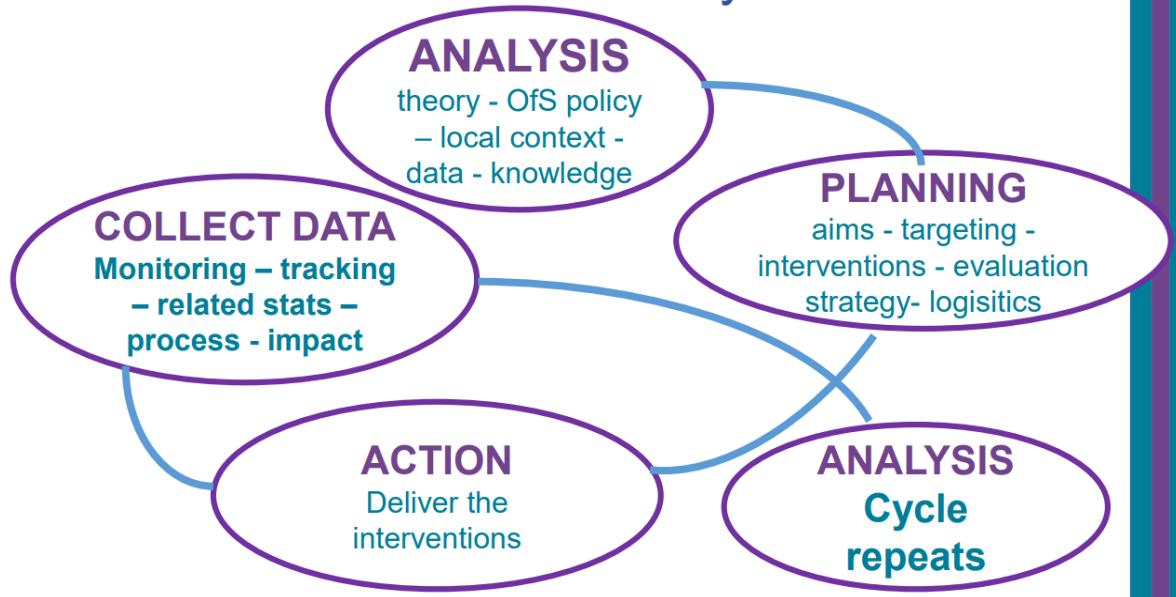


Figure 2.1: Action research reflective cycle for WP

NERUPI, 2019.

NERUPI's reflective cycle demonstrates the synergy between theory and practice. Both theoretical approaches and practitioner knowledge, which exists within the local context, are central to initial analysis and inform future planning and action. As the cycle is repeated, practitioner knowledge obtained and shaped during the previous cycle is once again considered in conjunction with the theory.

NERUPI breaks down different elements of capital in a way that is relevant to the field of widening participation and links them to clear objectives. The objectives are positioned to have an 'enabling' approach, considering the types of capital which hold value within their field, whilst avoiding the construct of a deficit model. The NERUPI framework is underpinned by Bourdieu's key theoretical concept but it "unashamedly celebrate[s] the use of Bourdieu's thinking tools in ways which he himself did not use" (Thatcher et al, 2016, cited in Hayton, 2018 p.35). This can be demonstrated in the way the framework breaks down Bourdieu's concepts and aligns with strategies to 'enable' people to build capital that is most valued (and

useful) in the field of higher education, along with developing their habitus to foster the confidence to progress onto HE.

SOCIAL AND ACADEMIC CAPITAL		HABITUS	SKILLS CAPITAL	INTELLECTUAL & SUBJECT CAPITAL
PROGRESSION CURRICULUM		STUDENT IDENTITIES	SKILLS CURRICULUM	KNOWLEDGE CURRICULUM
KNOW	CHOOSE	BECOME	PRACTISE	UNDERSTAND
Develop students' knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education	Develop students' capacity to navigate Higher Education sector and make informed choices	Develop students' confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenges of university life	Develop students' study skills and capacity for academic attainment	Develop students' understanding by contextualising subject knowledge

Figure 2.2: The NERUPI Framework

Hayton, Mackintosh & Warwick, 2017.

During the framework development, a variety of widening participation interventions were mapped against Bourdieu's concepts. Hayton (2018, p.42) explained how this process revealed "both synergies and omissions" and led to the amalgamation of social and academic capital (which Bourdieu regarded as a form of cultural capital) along with the introduction of skills capital. Intellectual and subject capital refers to Bourdieu's refinement of cultural capital, specifically relating to subject knowledge, this has been separated from skills capital which is associated with transferable study skills. The mapping of the framework to widening participation activities will be explored in the methodology section when examining the interventions which this study will evaluate using the NERUPI framework.

One final, yet crucial point, regarding the framework development is that by adopting Bourdieu's thinking tools, therefore recognising the power and subjectivity in relation to knowledge, this "does not mean that the knowledge created is not legitimate" (Hayton, 2018 p.46). Maton (2010, cited in Hayton, 2018 p.46) claims that 'knowledge is not merely a reflection of power relations but also comprises more or less epistemologically powerful

claims to truth'. this suggests that, whilst knowledge obtained may equip an individual with the skills to 'play' this particular 'game', that this knowledge is valuable in its' own right and may also be transferable to other fields.

2.5 Current Research and Evaluation Literature

This paper aims to evaluate the impact of the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect Programme whilst exploring 'what works' in widening participation. Along with the development of the NERUPI framework, there has been some key evaluation-related literature in recent years which has impacted the WP programme development and delivery, and subsequent evaluative approaches. Some of this literature is specific to the Uni Connect Programme, such as the Phase 1 Evaluation documents (Tazzyman *et al.*, 2018 and Bowes *et al.*, 2019), whereas others is more generalised withing the wider WP backdrop. Both can be situated within the context of the local evaluation of the FutureHY Uni Connect Programme.

2.5.1 Reviewing the first phase of the Uni Connect Programme

The *End of Phase 1 report for the national formative and impact evaluations* for the Uni Connect programme (then known as NCOP) was released in October 2019 (Bowes *et al.*). This built on the Year 1 report published in March 2018 (Tazzyman, *et al.*) and summarised key findings from the national programme evaluation, along with recommendations for Phase 2. The report recognised the emergence of local evidence of impact and the contribution this has made to the understanding of 'what works'. However, it was also stated that:

More could be done to improve both the volume and strength of the evidence by moving from a focus on developing an understanding of process to capturing more robust evidence of the impact of NCOP and the relative effectiveness of outreach activities on learner outcomes.

Bowes *et al*, 2019, p.7.

The evaluation design for Phase 2 of the Uni Connect Programme in York & North Yorkshire embedded impact evaluation at its' core. The approach was developed, utilising the NERUPI framework, to determine whether a particular intervention has brought about change in the target population. The *End of Phase 1 report for the national formative and impact evaluations* acknowledged that "models such as NERUPI... have provided useful theoretical frameworks and helped to focus local evaluation activity" (p.82) and recommended that "close alignment between the framework and the evaluation" as this "...ensures the evidence produced contributes to an understanding of the impact" of the programme against its' aims and objectives (p.87). In addition, it was suggested that partnerships utilise the 'Standards of Evaluation Evidence' produced by the OfS as these "ensure synergy with the work of the Centre for Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO)" (p.98). These recommendations were adopted for the evaluation undertaken in this paper and will be further explored in the methodology section.

Other findings that were presented in the Phase 1 report was that "limited use is currently being made of RCTs [randomised control trials] and quasi-experimental methods" (Bowes et al 2019, p.96). The authors suggest that, by comparing the outcomes of those in the target group compared to a control group, the attribution of impact is strengthened. This conclusion mirrors that of TASO's 2020 review of WP impact evaluation evidence (Robinson & Salvestrini).

2.5.2 TASO: A review of existing evaluation evidence

In the TASO review, Robinson & Salvestrini analysed 92 studies (from Uni Connect and the wider WP sector) which provided empirical evidence on the impact of WP interventions focussed on those from underrepresented groups. They commended "an increased focus on robust evaluations" (p.5) but were concerned about the lack of demonstratable causality, particularly in relation to HE enrolments. The TASO/OfS Standard of Evidence table demonstrates the value assigned to RCTs in relation to evidencing causality:

	Description	Evidence	Claims
Type 1: Narrative	The impact evaluation provides a narrative or a coherent theory of change to motivate its selection of activities in the context of a coherent strategy.	Evidence of impact elsewhere and/or in the research literature on access and participation activity effectiveness or from existing evaluation results.	Coherent explanation of what it is done and why. Claims are research-based.
Type 2: Empirical Enquiry	The impact evaluation collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes but does not establish any direct causal effect.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post intervention change, or a difference compared to what might otherwise have happened.	Can demonstrate that interventions are associated with positive results.
Type 3: Causality	The impact evaluation methodology provides evidence of a causal effect of an intervention.	Quantitative and/or qualitative evidence of a pre/post treatment change on participants relative to an appropriate control or comparison group who did not take part in the intervention.	Can demonstrate that the intervention causes improvement using an appropriate control or comparison group.

Table 2.1: Standards of Evidence Table

Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020, p.13.

The drive for 'scientific' tools such as RCTs within the context of WP is a contentious issue. Academics and practitioners have raised concerns around the practicalities of running such trials. In addition to the methodological barriers...

...we do have to question whether it is ethical to provide additional services and support for some students and not others – particularly in an area where we already know that this particular group of students is disadvantaged

Hayton, 2020

The Uni Connect Programme in York & North Yorkshire recruits the majority of its' participants through schools. Experience has demonstrated that student involvement in evaluation activity but not a WP intervention itself is not something that the schools are

willing to engage with as they see no direct benefit to their learners. Whilst the data obtained during an RCT *may* demonstrate causality in that instance, it may neglect the individual context of the participants. If all focus is on RCTs as a 'gold standard' then this could disregard suggestions that "more sensitive, nuanced approaches can and do provide us with richer, more useful data for both WP theory and practice" (Holmes, 2020).

2.6 Situating the Study in the Known Literature: A Conclusion

FutureHY, the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect Programme has drawn on theory, as well as practical experience and local research throughout the ongoing development of its' outreach programme. Drawing heavily on Bourdieu, through the NERUPI framework, interventions and subsequent evaluation has focussed on enabling interventions which build capital relevant to the field on accessing higher education. Considerations around evaluation methodologies have recognised recent recommendations from the regulator and evaluation centres. These will be explored in greater depth when discussing the methodology of this evaluation project.

An important factor in a regional evaluation is to synthesise the available local research. The knowledge gleaned from this existing literature can be used to shape a programme but also to guide evaluators as to how might performance against specific objectives be evidenced. Work must be undertaken to map this local knowledge against the NERUPI framework, considering how aspects, such as areas of knowledge, or confidence and resilience may transpire into measurable outcomes. As this paper progresses into methodological considerations, it must be acknowledged that the review of literature has drawn out conflicting opinions in regard to the most effective, yet ethical approaches to WP evaluation. This, therefore, must be a key consideration when designing an appropriate evaluative method.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This evaluation aims to assess the impact of the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect Programme within its' local context. Secondary data, published by FutureHY (the Uni Connect Partnership), was utilised using both quantitative and qualitative data to inform the evaluation. The approach of a contribution analysis was adopted to illustrate the local impact of the programme. According to the global collaboration Better Evaluation (2020) contribution analysis "is particularly useful in situations where the programme is not experimental ... but in situations where the programme has been funded on the basis of a relatively clearly articulated theory of change". The FutureHY local Uni Connect programme was approved by the Office for Students based on an evaluation plan which articulated a clear theory of change incorporating the NERUPI framework. The programme team and evaluator did not have the resources or access to a control group to be able to facilitate an experimental trial such as an RCT. There were also ethical concerns regarding these types of methods, which will be explored later in this section. The FutureHY programme did, however, publish a number of evaluation reports and anonymised datasets for a wide variety of outreach interventions across the life of the project. Evaluation was mapped against the NERUPI framework and informed by theory of change, and provided evidence from participants, teachers, and outreach practitioners to demonstrate the impact of the programme.

"Evaluation is the process of determining merit, worth, or significance; an evaluation is a product of that process" (Scriven, 2007, p.1). Often concerned with the achievement of intended outcomes, working within a set of 'givens', including programme, field and participants. (Cohen et al, 2018, p.81). Plewis and Mason (2005, cited in Cohen et al, 2018, p.79) suggest that evaluation is 'at heart' applied research that uses the tools of research in the social sciences to provide answers to effects of programmes. These considerations support the methodological approach of this project:

- Formulating operational questions; What is the impact of the York & North Yorkshire Uni Connect programme within the local area? Do interventions result in positive

outcomes in relation to the NERUPI framework and OfS objectives? ‘What works’ in widening participation? (testing the programme theory of change).

- Deciding appropriate methodologies; Mixed method review of secondary data and existing evaluation reports. Using the NERUPI framework to develop success indicators and assess evidence of impact.
- Deciding which instruments to use for data collection; pre-determined as utilising existing datasets but favouring where pre/post methodology has been adopted. Examining a variety of outputs including survey, focus group and embedded evaluation activity.
- Addressing reliability and validity in the investigation and instrumentation; Some small sample sizes, absence of control group.
- Addressing ethical issues in conducting the investigation; A rationale for utilising secondary datasets and reviewing existing reports.
- Deciding on data analysis techniques; Complexities due to an array of original data collection techniques. Development of ‘standards of evidence’ to tease out indicators for change and map against NERUPI objectives.
- Deciding on reporting and interpreting results; The results are interpreted in line with NERUPI objectives and OfS programme objectives.

(adapted from Cohen, et al, 2018, p.79).

These methodological aspects will be explored in further detail throughout this section of the evaluation study. Firstly, the philosophical paradigm of the evaluation project will be examined before detailing the methods which were adopted in the study. Justification for the choice of methods will then be presented, giving consideration to the current unprecedented circumstances of the COVID-19 global pandemic and the impact on both the Uni Connect programme and subsequent evaluation. This will lead to a discussion around reliability and validity of the data in addition to the ethical considerations of the evaluator. Although the data employed during this study is of secondary nature and has previously been made available by the FutureHY programme, this paper analyses this information using a specific approach developed by mapping outcomes and indicators for change to the NERUPI evaluation framework. The penultimate section within the methodology will discuss the

limitations of this evaluative study before a concluding passage summarising why a pragmatic approach utilising secondary data was the most appropriate method in which to undertake this study.

3.2 Research Philosophy

This study is informed by the research and evaluation paradigm of pragmatism. “... in terms of philosophy of social research” pragmatism “has been associated with mixed methods inquiry”, which enables this study “the flexibility to see the merits of both quantitative and qualitative methods and adaptive to whatever one is researching” (University of Warwick, 2017). The pragmatic approach adopts the position that inquiry is focused on conceptual clarification, therefore enabling ideas to be tested. This approach aligns with the concept of this study, a deductive process, in ‘testing’ whether WP interventions result in the desired outcomes, based on a Bourdieusian-informed theory of change. The University of Warwick (2017) suggest that “pragmatists will see knowledge as fallible” and that “past research can inform action however researchers cannot claim to offer ‘anywhere, anytime’ answers”. This again, to an extent, aligns with the desire to build an evidence base of ‘what works’ in WP whilst acknowledging the context in which the intervention has taken place.

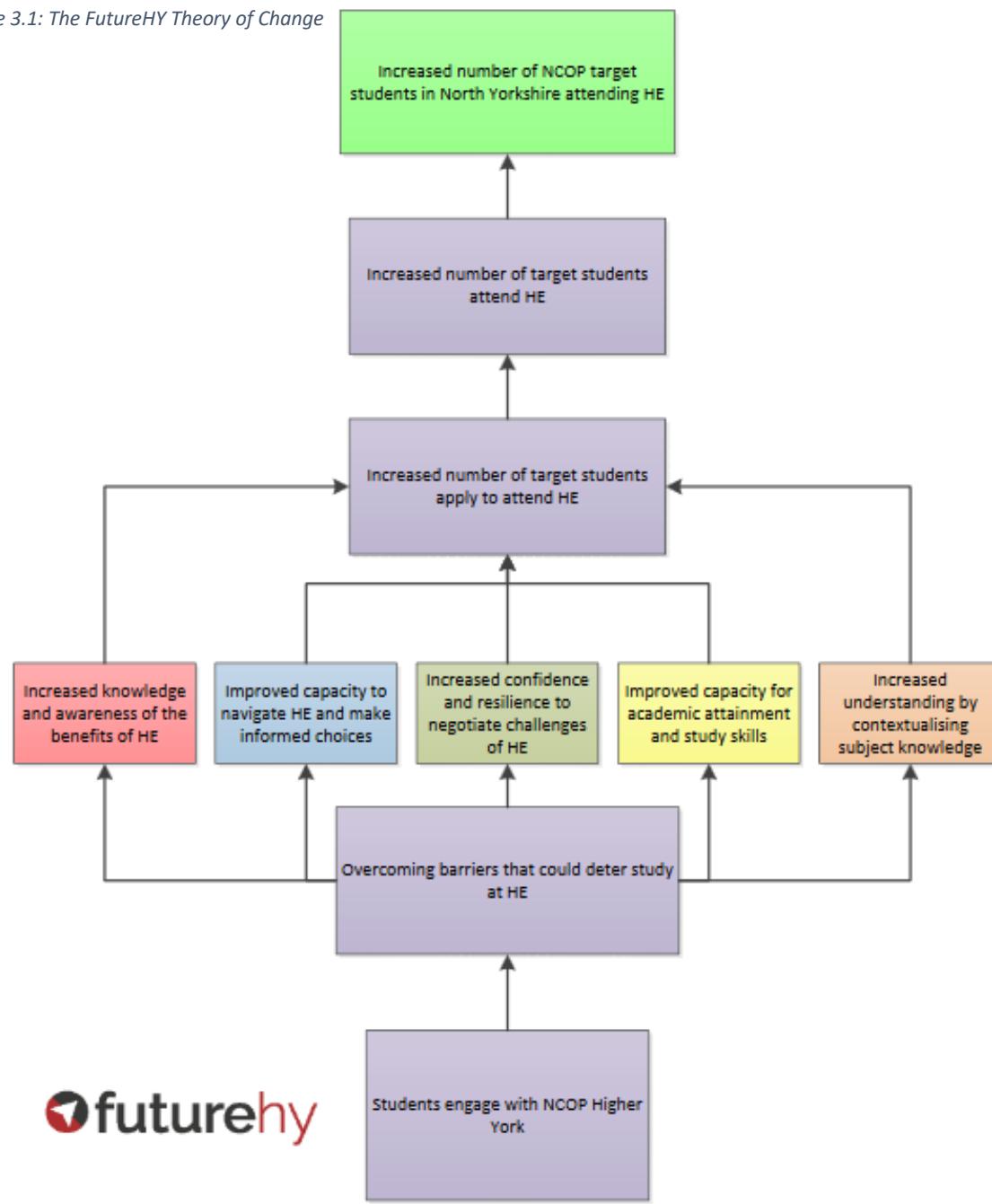
This Pragmatic approach, however, particularly in relation to ‘what works’, does have its’ limitations. It may test the outputs and outcomes in relation to the inputs in the theory of change but it does not challenge the assumptions set out. At this stage of the Uni Connect Programme, there is limited progression data available. The key assumptions in the FutureHY theory of change (Figure 3.1) relate to programme participation resulting in increased progression to HE as a result. It is beyond the scope of the data in this evaluative study to test these assumptions, therefore it was deemed that aspects of the pragmatic paradigm are justified in this context.

3.3 Description of methods

This study has adopted an approach utilising secondary data. The programme on which the impact evaluation is based, FutureHY – part of Uni Connect, has collected, analysed and published a large amount of evaluative data pertaining to the interventions delivered by their practitioners and funded-third parties. This study makes use of that available data and undertakes an in-depth evaluation of the programme's outcomes based on the NERUPI evaluation framework (Hayton, 2018) and the OfS Uni Connect programme objectives (Office for Students, 2020a). This study seeks to meet the OfS' Type 2 standard of evidence, which is an empirical enquiry where 'the impact evaluation collects data on impact and reports evidence that those receiving an intervention have better outcomes but does not establish any direct causal effect' (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020, p.13). In order to demonstrate whether the FutureHY programme interventions are associated with positive results, this study has selected as much available secondary data that collected pre and post intervention data. As this is not available for all activities, qualitative reflections by teachers, which often include observation of in-activity tasks aimed to demonstrate new skills or knowledge have been obtained, have also been included.

In order to represent the selected interventions included in this evaluation as part of the FutureHY programme as a whole, activities were selected with intended outcomes that, collectively, include all five of the NERUPI pillars. The perceived barriers to HE (based on Bourdieusian theory) and objectives of the programme are articulated in the theory of change:

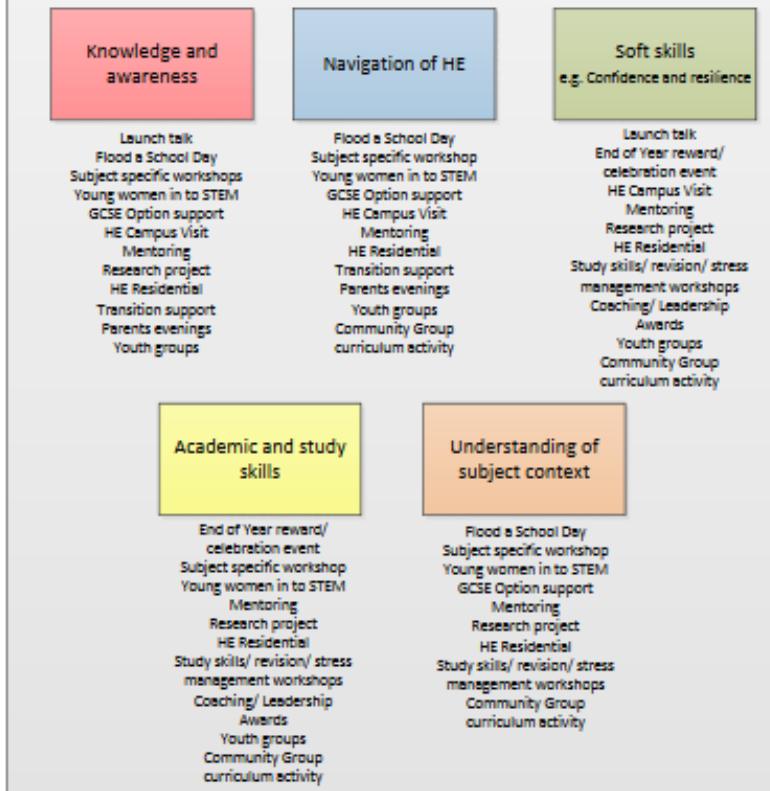
Figure 3.1: The FutureHY Theory of Change



Assumptions

- Students and influencers engage with the project initially
- Students attain the grades at KS4 and KS5 to attend HE
- Overcoming barriers encourages progression to HE
- Applications to HE are converted into attendance

Perceived barriers to HE and Activities



In the theory of change the perceived barriers to HE link to the intended NERUPI outcomes in the following way:

Perceived Barrier to HE	NERUPI Pillar	Intended outcome for participants
Knowledge and awareness	KNOW	Increased knowledge and awareness of the benefits of HE
Navigation of HE	CHOOSE	Improved capacity to navigate HE and make informed choices
Soft skills	BECOME	Increased confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenges of HE
Academic and study skills	PRACTISE	Improved capacity for academic attainment and study skills
Understanding of subject context	UNDERSTAND	Increased understanding by contextualising subject knowledge

Table 3.1: NERUPI Objectives

The theory of change articulates the assumptions and intentions of the FutureHY programme as a whole. As highlighted previously, it is beyond the scope of the data available to be included in this study to test these assumptions in relation to long-term outcomes (primarily HE progression). It is important, however, that the assumptions are acknowledged as they suggest a link between short to medium-term outcomes, such as skills development and the long-term outcome of increased progression to HE. This would be an important consideration for future studies reflecting on the longer-term impact of the programme.

The NERUPI pillars and intended outcomes represent a relatively broad objective in terms of how the programme will enable participants to overcome barriers to HE. This is refined in the programme's Progression Framework (*Appendix 1.*), which further utilises the NERUPI framework to establish more specific objectives in relation to both the educational stage of the participant (such as Year Group or current level of study) and the definitive aspects of an intervention. A short assembly talk about HE, for example, would be expected to yield different outcomes to a week-long residential programme. The specific NERUPI objectives for each intervention will be detailed in the evidence and analysis section, which will rationalise the selection of explicit impact and success measures (or 'indicators for change').

In order for the evaluation to include representation across the FutureHY programme in terms of activity types, NERUPI objectives, and stage of participants (Years 9-13), the following interventions were purposively selected to be included in the study:

Name of Intervention	Associated NERUPI Pillars	Year Group	Original Data Collection Method	Original Sample Size
Exam Prep Workshops	Become, Practise, Understand	Year 11 & 13	Pre & Post participant QUANT questionnaire with QUAL aspects	Approx. 300
Mock Open Day	Know, Choose, Become	Year 12 & 13	Post participant QUANT questionnaire	Approx. 100
Project Dare	Become, Practise, Understand	Year 10	Pre and post participant outcome star (QUANT with QUAL aspects). Follow-up Focus groups. Practitioner interviews (post)	Approx. 100

Table 3.2: Overview of Original Evaluation Reports

Each of these interventions have been delivered in more than one institution and have been key elements of the FutureHY programme. Including these within the study enables analysis of the impact of some of the programme's core offer, whilst making use of the data with the largest sample size and most robust original data collection methods.

3.4 Justification for the methodology

Prior to commencement of this study, a number of evaluative approaches were considered. In line with the OfS' gold standard of 'type 3' evaluation, RCTs and quasi experimental methods were discussed with the FutureHY programme team. There were practical concerns in terms of accessing a control group as teachers were understandably not keen on enabling students to be involved with evaluative aspects of the study without being in receipt of the

potential benefits of an intervention. This also led to ethical concerns as all students within the Uni Connect wards were targeted for interventions, thus not leaving a comparable group (as those who choose to opt out may respond differently to those 'not selected' in a trial approach). This therefore led to discussion around randomly selecting participants and withholding interventions from the control group for the purpose of a study. The FutureHY team (including myself as the author of this study, who is also employed within the team) felt that this undermined the intention of the programme to support as many young people as possible. A potential way to overcome this issue would be to deliver the same intervention at a later date, once the study had been completed to ensure that participants were not disadvantaged by being allocated to the control group, however the project runs on a tight timescale and has limited access to students in school around a busy curriculum timetable and this was deemed not deemed to be a viable option. Therefore the 'type 2' evaluation standard of empirical enquiry was decided upon.

As there was a myriad of available secondary data which, in some instances, the evaluator had been involved in collecting prior to and outside of the remit of this study, a logical approach was to utilise this. The use of secondary data overcame issues in accessing students in school to capture information which was already available. There were plans, initially, to form an exploratory mixed methods approach, following up with primary data collection through interviews with teachers and practitioners but COVID-19 related school closures and lockdown prevented this from developing. There would be potential scope to undertake this work as a follow-up study.

3.5 Reliability, validity, and ethics

According to Watling (1995), "Reliability and validity are tools of an essentially positivist epistemology" (as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p.598). Joppe (2000, as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p.598) defines reliability as:

...The extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a

study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable.

The local, primarily semi-rural nature of the sample does mean that it is unlikely to yield results which would be replicated amongst the wider population, as this would disregard the context of the study. By utilising the NERUPI framework, however, and developing success indicators based on the Progression Framework for each intervention, this provides a method to continue to replicate evaluation of delivery and the potential to reveal possible patterns in relation to specific characteristics (such as geographical location, gender or socio-economic status of the participant). This in turn feeds into the ‘what works’ evidence base whilst acknowledging the impossibility of conducting this type of intervention and evaluation in a clinical style ‘test’ within a complex social structure.

According to Nkwake (2015), validity relates to the utilisation of measures “that will feasibly, ethically and accurately answer the evaluation questions” (p.65). When considering the validity of evaluative research, Nkwake suggests we ask the following questions:

To what extent do the measures (methods, constructs, variables, comparisons) accurately depict the essential features of the programme? To what extent are acceptable data collection procedures used?

2015, p.65.

In response, this study included evaluation reports of key FutureHY activity, which were deemed to be reflective of both the core ethos and the wide range of the interventions delivered as part of the programme. Although this study has not been conducted in a clinical manner but is drawing on both available quantitative and qualitative data produced as part of the FutureHY project delivery. The FutureHY programme team have also collected and published teacher and practitioner data which has enabled this study to evaluate the programme impact from a number of perspectives. Teacher follow-up data has been particularly useful as it reinforces observable student behaviour in the days and weeks following an intervention and can validate the students’ self-reported perceptions or intentions articulated at the time of the intervention.

As this study solely relies on secondary data, ethical approval was not required. It was, however, confirmed prior to commencement of the study, that ethical approval had been received by York St John University (the host institution for the FutureHY Uni Connect partnership) to deliver and undertake in-house evaluation of the FutureHY outreach programme. This ensured that the secondary data utilised in this study was originally collected and processed within an appropriate ethical framework. The utilisation of secondary datasets and evaluation reports meant that all data included within this study was anonymised and this mitigated the risk of potential identification of original participants. As an extra precaution, where data in the original dataset or reporting included school names or specific job roles (such as 'Aspirations Leader'), these have been removed in this study to ensure complete anonymisation.

One potential drawback of using anonymised secondary data is that it is not possible to identify whether an individual participant has only been involved in the specific intervention they completed an evaluation form (or other method) for at that time, or whether they are included in a number of activities incorporated within this study. Potential future studies using primary data collection could track participants throughout the FutureHY programme and measure knowledge and intentions periodically as this would evidence the impact of Uni Connect, as a holistic programme, on an individual. Unfortunately, this type of study was not an option at this time, primarily due to the closure of schools due to Covid-19 which lead to the cancellation and postponement of the majority of FutureHY's planned interventions. This study will however evaluate several key component interventions of the FutureHY programme against the NERUPI framework (short to medium-term objectives) and the OfS Uni Connect objectives (medium to long-term) to 'test' the programme theory of change and to evidence the impact which is ascertainable at this time. This is reinforced by secondary data from teachers which reflects on the impact of the programme more holistically on their students. Together, this forms a contribution analysis of the impact of the FutureHY Uni Connect Programme, both on participants as individuals but also within the wider local context.

3.6 Data analysis

Secondary analysis of three evaluation studies published by the FutureHY Uni Connect partnership was undertaken as part of this study. This included a variety of components, differing between reports, such as anonymised datasets in addition to a reflective narrative and key findings from the intervention. Data from these interventions can converge to support a contribution analysis of the impact of the FutureHY programme locally, and its' achievement against the OfS and NERUPI objectives. Reporting, however had taken varying formats during the lifecycle of the FutureHY project. This was due to development and refinement of the programme's evaluation approach along with changes in staff. Therefore, it was imperative to adopt a methodological approach which offered consistent analysis of each intervention against the programme's objectives. This was achieved by the development of an evidence standards table, which mapped the intended outcomes of the intervention against the NERUPI objectives at the refined level found in the FutureHY progression framework. It was then decided what the indicators of success would look like. For example, in the NERUPI pillar 'Become' an outcome for a Year 10 learner could be to develop communication and presentation skills using different mediums. In a pre and post activity survey a measure of success could be ascertained by a participant rating their presentation skills before and after the activity and enabling analysis of any positive or negative changes in value. For teacher responses this could include narrative around observation of a task embedded within an intervention where there it is noted that a student has 'developed confidence' or learned to use a new presentation medium.

The nature of using secondary data from multiple sources led to a complex evaluation study. By introducing indicators for success, it has meant that appropriate methods of analysis could be adopted whilst measuring against a clear and consistent framework. An outline of the activity and the method for analysis will be clearly detailed in the data analysis section of this study, alongside each intervention. This will illustrate how the secondary data has been analysed to consider performance against the objectives. This has led to a 'RAG' rating of each

intervention against the objectives set out in the programme's Progression Framework and the overarching Uni Connect Objectives set by the Office for Students.

3.7 Limitations

It is acknowledged that this research cannot imply causality but can, however, offer robust contributory evidence.

The report from a contribution analysis is not definitive proof, but rather provides evidence and a line of reasoning from which we can draw a plausible conclusion that, within some level of confidence, the program has made an important contribution to the documented results.

(Better Evaluation, 2020).

In 'testing' the theoretically grounded theory of change, the evidence demonstrates areas of the FutureHY programme where positive outcomes are associated, as well as gaps in outcomes or areas for potential improvement. This creates a grounding for future studies which examine specific aspects of the programme in greater depth. Further studies could potentially investigate research options using control or matched groups to move towards the Office for Students 'Type 3' evaluation methods, if evaluators are satisfied that they can overcome practical and ethical considerations raised in this study.

There is also a local context to this evaluation, and this results in two different limiting factors of the study. Firstly, the rural nature and specific targeting of the Uni Connect programme resulted in small sample sizes for the evaluation of some interventions. This could not be avoided, however, where multiple sessions of the same intervention have been delivered across the region, the partnership aggregated the outcome data to provide a more robust sample size to mitigate this issue. Secondly, there are considerations around how the outcomes feed into the national 'what works' evidence base. The rural nature of North Yorkshire may produce differing outcomes to a large inner-city school elsewhere and it is important not to make assumptions about how the interventions may work in other settings. Because of the localised nature of the project, rather than simply asking 'what works' in

widening participation, the evidence should be considered as an answer to a more refined inquiry; what works, for whom, and in what circumstances? (Pawson & Tilley, 2004). Although this evaluation has not been undertaken from Pawson and Tilley's realist perspective, the element of context is still considered to be significant.

3.8 Methodology Conclusion

In summary, this evaluation has been designed to specifically analyse the secondary data available but does offer a methodological approach which can be replicated. It aims to demonstrate where the programme is meeting objectives (NERUPI outcomes and OfS objectives) and highlight areas to review where outcomes are not as expected. It is acknowledged that there may be of unintended, unanticipated and unpredictable effects as a result of the intervention and that the explicit use of indicators has the potential to overlook these. There is also an understanding that the primary evaluation reports included in this study will have included selected qualitative responses, which may limit the ability to capture these unexpected outcomes. Where qualitative responses are included and do not align with the intended NERUPI objectives, these are addressed separately in the evaluative narrative.

It is important that all outcomes, intended or unintended, is considered within the evaluation as they feed into the iterative evaluation cycle and will inform future programme design, delivery and evaluation.

4 Evidence and Analysis

4.1 Introduction

This section will examine secondary evaluation data for three interventions independently, considering both the intended NERUPI outcomes and stated success indicators, before drawing on qualitative data from teachers and stakeholders on the contributory impact of the FutureHY programme as a whole. The approach of examining outcomes of some of the FutureHY's core interventions, in order to assess the impact of the programme more holistically, was selected as the evidence demonstrates how the elements of the activities

contribute to the overall programme objectives. Whilst these secondary intervention reports addressed the objectives of each activity in relation to the NERUPI framework, there was limited evaluative consideration of how this contributed to the overall success of the FutureHY Programme within these reports. The programme itself had been designed to address the NERUPI outcomes and OfS objectives, therefore considering the interventions as ‘parts of a whole’ was a clear pathway for this evaluation to follow.

Once the three individual intervention evaluations have been considered in relation to the programme objectives, qualitative data collected to evidence the impact of the programme as an accumulation of sustained and progressive interventions (including the three covered in this study amongst many more) will be introduced. This will prompt an analysis of how the elements of the programme piece together to support the young people involved. The concluding passage will outline the areas in which there is strong evidence that the programme, both its’ elements and more holistically, has had a positive local impact. There will also be recommendation for future evaluation in areas where there is either limited evidence of success, or the data suggests that an intervention is not meeting its’ overarching objectives.

Secondary data and reporting from four FutureHY project initiatives form the contributory analysis of the local impact of the programme, along with an examination of teachers’ and stakeholders’ reflections on the FutureHY programme as a whole. An element of pragmatism was adopted as interventions were selected for analysis based on the amount of available evaluation data and/or reporting for each activity and the number of participants or beneficiary institutions (schools and colleges, for example). Each activity was either delivered multiple times across different schools and colleges or was a large event with participants from a number of institutions attending. This approach aims to ensure the study is as robust as possible given the available data.

In the development of the activity, the FutureHY team mapped the expected outcomes, based on session content, to the NERUPI evaluation framework (see *Fig.2*), with specific age/level of current qualification-relevant outcomes drawn from the FutureHY NERUPI-informed progression framework (Appendix A.). These intended outcomes, along with space to capture unintended outcomes, were utilised in the primary collection of evaluation data for these activities. There were a variety of evaluation methodologies and reporting approaches adopted across the programme which will be explored in the secondary analysis of each activity. The NERUPI evaluation framework is designed to be flexible therefore it does not prescribe specific methodologies or define what 'success' looks like, rather setting out how interventions should 'enable' participants. However, in order to undertake an evaluation of the impact of the FutureHY programme more holistically, and to be able to feed into the evidence base of 'what works' in widening participation, success indicators were developed for this study to support the secondary analysis. The majority of the success indicators were built by mapping the NERUPI objectives and the questions asked in primary evaluation forms and focus groups for example, if a NERUPI objective is to enable participants to "gain a positive first-hand experience of student life and a university environment" students self-reporting that, as a result of this activity, they feel more confident about attending future open days or that they "feel like higher education is for people like me" would indicate that the objective had been met. Some success measures were more nuanced, and related to a successful completion of an embedded task within an intervention. This could be, for example, a collaborative presentation which would demonstrate participants have developed effective communication skills. This element is more difficult to attribute the outcomes to the intervention as there is no 'pre' activity measure, however teacher and practitioner qualitative data can support this evidence.

4.2 The methodological role of the Exam Prep Workshops

The Exam Prep Workshops are delivered in schools and colleges to students who have upcoming exams (primarily Year 11 and Year 13). They have been delivered on behalf of FutureHY by a practitioner who is an ex-international footballer, performance psychologist and university lecturer in Sports Psychology. The sessions are delivered to full cohorts (from class size to full year group) in either a workshop or lecture-style setting, depending on what

the school requests. The 2019-20 Exam Prep Report (FutureHY, 2020) describes how sessions were delivered to over 450 participants in the 2019/20 academic year (the Coronavirus lockdown meant many planned events due March onwards in 2020 were cancelled). Over 300 participant responses were recorded in a pre and post intervention survey, with responses analysed by FutureHY in an annual report. The pre and post measures, primarily consisting of quantitative data enable analysis of the 'distanced travelled' by participants to evidence the impact of the intervention.

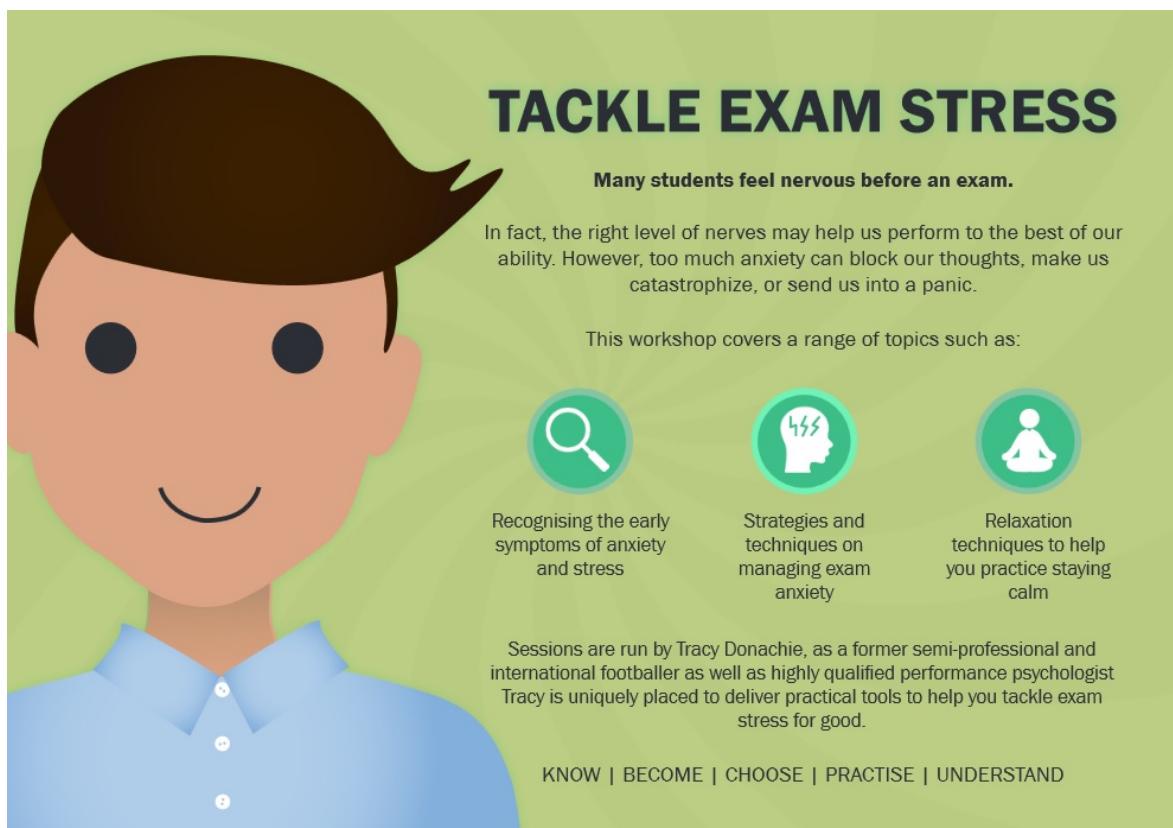


Figure 4.1: Excerpt from the Exam Prep Student Flyer

FutureHY, 2020.

The Exam Prep Workshops are at Level 2b on the FutureHY Progression Framework (Appendix A.), addressing three of the NERUPI pillars: *Become*, *Practise*, and *Understand*. The focus of the intervention was around building revision skills and techniques, and managing stress and improving confidence around exams. The pre and post-survey proposed a number of questions and statements linked to the NERUPI pillars, in order to measure participants feelings towards their upcoming exams. There were also open-ended questions at the end of

the survey asking participants to state what they have learned from this session and what they will take away. The quantitative responses were presented in the report to demonstrate changes in responses post-activity:

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure
Pre - Intervention	10%	27%	33%	20%	5%	5%
Post- Intervention	10%	39%	33%	13%	3%	2%
Percentage Point Change	-	+ 12%	-	-7%	-2%	-3%

Table 4.1: Exam Prep Workshop Responses - "I feel confident about my exams"

	Definitely will apply	Very likely	Fairly likely	Fairly unlikely	Very unlikely	Definitely won't apply	Don't know/ Unsure
Pre - Intervention	34%	22%	17%	8%	6%	5%	8%
Post- Intervention	35%	22%	16%	8%	6%	7%	6%
Percentage Point Change	+1%	-	-1%	-	-	+2%	-2%

Table 4.2: Exam Prep Workshop Responses - How likely are you to apply to Higher Education?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know/Unsure
Pre - Intervention	6%	28%	36%	23%	4%	3%
Post- Intervention	7%	35%	35%	17%	3%	3%
Percentage Point Change	+1%	+7%	-1%	-6%	-1%	-

Table 4.3: Exam Prep Workshop Responses - "I feel prepared for my exams"

The qualitative responses were presented in a word cloud format, along with selected full quotations. This demonstrated some of the key aspects of the workshop which participants would take away and hopefully implement in their exam preparations.



Figure 4.2: Word Cloud from Exam Prep Workshop Post-Intervention Qualitative Responses

Both of these datasets were analysed for this study by developing success indicators, which linked back to the NERUPI objectives asking 'how could the data evidence that this objective has been met?'. An assessment was then made as to the extent that the outcome had been met. This was based on both what the data suggested, for example a marked increase in confidence around exams, and whether or not the questions asked in the evaluation form were able to sufficiently provide data to evidence impact.

Table 4.4: Exam Prep Workshop Evaluation

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Become	[Participants] Develop confidence in their potential to progress onto and succeed at university	Increase in participants stating they feel confident about their exams [QUANT]	12 percentage point increase in participants strongly agreeing or agreeing that they feel confident about their exams. 9 percentage point reduction in those in disagreement with the statement.	Positive impact – short term, relating to exam confidence
		Increase in participants self-reported likelihood of applying to HE [QUANT]	Minimal change	No evidence of impact on longer term intentions relating to HE progression
Practise	Develop and apply project planning skills	Participants state they feel more prepared for their exams following the session [QUANT]	An 8% percentage point increase in participants strongly agreeing or agreeing that they feel prepared for exams. A 7% point reduction in those who disagree /strongly disagree with the statement.	Positive impact
Practise	Develop revision techniques and skills	Participants can articulate techniques/skills they will take away from the session [QUAL]	Participants describe coping and stress-management mechanisms they've learned in the session and talk about resources they will now access for exam preparation	Positive impact

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Understand	Access and experience appropriate attainment-raising interventions	Participants describe how they will implement elements of the workshop to support their exam performance [QUAL]	<p>Participants state they feel 'more motivated' and 'more prepared' for their exams and suggest they will adopt the revision techniques they have learned.</p> <p>Difficult to attribute this to attainment-raising without longer-term study</p>	<p>Positive immediate impact</p> <p>Unable to link to exam attainment in this study</p>

The pre and post nature of the primary data collection enabled the evaluation to capture the immediate impact of the session. Overall, this was distinctly positive, with participants stating an increase in confidence and preparedness for their upcoming exams. Confidence, which links to the NERUPI *Become* pillar, was a stand-out area of success from both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the study. Participants also articulated planning and revision techniques, along with stress-management approaches which link to the *Practise* element of the NERUPI framework.

Possibly due to the surveys being completed immediately following the event, the data failed to show an impact of participants' intention to apply to HE. Further studies could undertake a longitudinal evaluation of the Exam Prep Workshops which would include measuring exam performance and following-up with participants to see whether HE intentions and confidence levels change once they have time to implement what they have learned in the session.

4.3 The methodological role of the Mock Open Day

The 'Mock Open Day' is an event hosted at a university, providing information and support for participants to prepare for attending upcoming HE provider open days. The event itself, from the booking process through to the structure of the day, is set up to mimic a traditional open event to help build confidence and knowledge around this integral part of the HE application process. Subject specific talks were replaced with those such as 'how to find and choose open days' and 'making the most' of open events (Harland, 2020).

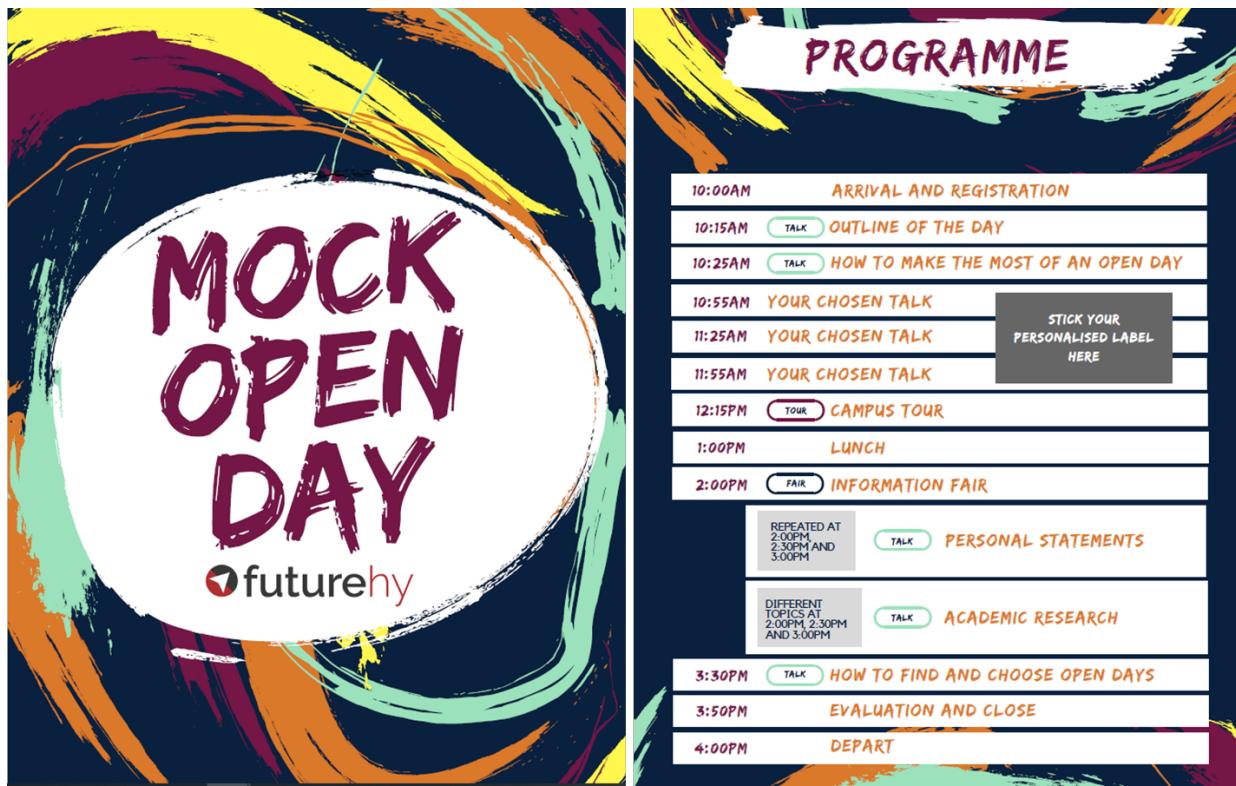


Figure 4.3: The Mock Open Day 2018 Programme

Harland, 2020.

The choice of talks included 'What to Expect at Uni', Student Life, Student Finance and Budgeting and Accommodation (FutureHY, 2018). The 2018 event was hosted at the University of York with approximately 100 attendees from across 10 North Yorkshire Sixth Forms and FE colleges. The event was delivered by FutureHY staff as well as staff and student ambassadors from FutureHY's partner institutions. University of York Student Ambassadors delivered the campus tour, which included visiting a variety of teaching spaces, social areas and student accommodation. The information fair included stands from all North Yorkshire HE providers plus some from further afield in a 'UCAS Fair' type setup. There was also representation from University of York and York St John University clubs and societies as well as disability support and volunteering opportunities. The academic research sessions consisted of PHD students presenting snapshots of their research and answering questions.

FutureHY developed the event in line with the NERUPI pillars *Know, Choose and Become*, mapping specific outcomes for the Year 12 students with the NERUPI Level 3 outcomes on

the FutureHY Progression Framework (Appendix A.). Utilising the Mock Open Day Evaluation Report (FutureHY 2018) and information from the event, including the Evaluation Form (Harland, 2020) a set of success indicators were developed to determine whether the evaluation data collected demonstrated that the objectives of the intervention had been met. These have been broken down by NERUPI pillar and an assessment made of the event's progress against the overarching NERUPI objective. All secondary data used in the analysis for this intervention was of a quantitative nature. It is acknowledged that this makes it difficult to assess any unintended outcomes of this particular intervention.

Table 4.5: Mock Open Day Evaluation

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Related Element of the Event	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Know	Discover course and placement opportunities in Higher Education	Information Fair	Participants agree that, as a result of this activity, they feel more knowledgeable about Higher Education	71% of participants either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt more knowledgeable about HE after the event.	Data suggests a positive impact
Know	Find out about research areas, expertise and facilities in Higher Education and new areas of development	Academic Research Session	Participants state that they found the Academic Research Session 'useful'	On average, participants rated the Academic Research Session 7/10 for 'usefulness' Anecdotal feedback suggested lack of subject choice for talks reduced student satisfaction	Data suggests a positive impact however there is scope to improve by offering participants more choice of research areas to explore
Know	Explore social and leisure, and extracurricular opportunities in Higher Education	Information Fair Student Life Talk	Participants state that they found the Student Life Talk 'useful'	On average, participants rated the Student Life talk 9.4/10 for 'usefulness'	Data suggests a positive impact

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Related Element of the Event	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Know	Discover career benefits of Higher education and the employment opportunities for graduates	(Unable to identify)	N/A	Unclear	Data does not address this outcome
Know	Find out about academic and information services, facilities and resources	Information Fair Campus Tour	Participants state that they found the Campus Tour and Information Fair 'useful'	87% of participants stated that they found the Campus Tour 'Useful' 80% found the Information Fair 'Useful'	Data suggests a positive impact
Choose	Evaluate different types of Higher Education Institution in terms of personal interests and career aspirations	Information Fair	Participants agree that, as a result of this activity, they feel more knowledgeable about Higher Education	71% of participants either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt more knowledgeable about HE after the event.	Data suggests a positive impact however questions did not specifically reflect personal interests and aspirations

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Related Element of the Event	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Choose	Compare degree courses and study options across a range of universities	Information Fair	Participants agree that, as a result of this activity, they feel more knowledgeable about Higher Education	71% of participants either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt more knowledgeable about HE after the event.	Data suggests a positive impact Intercepts during the event could confirm participants are comparing multiple options
Choose	Compare student finance, budgeting support and student employment opportunities across a range of universities	Student Finance and Budgeting Talk	Participants rate the Student Finance and Budgeting Talk as useful	On average, participants rated the Student Finance and Budgeting talk 9.5/10 for 'usefulness'	Data suggests a positive impact
Become	Gain a positive first-hand experience of student life and a university environment	Whole Event	Participants agree that, as a result of this activity, they feel more confident about attending future open days	74% Participants either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they feel more confident about attending future Open Events	Data suggests a positive impact although questioning could better align with the expected outcome

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Related Element of the Event	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Become	Become familiar with learning and teaching approaches in Higher Education	Whole event Academic Research Session	Participants agree that, as a result of this activity, they feel more knowledgeable about Higher Education Participants state that they found the Academic Research Session 'useful'	71% of participants either 'agreed' or 'strongly agreed' that they felt more knowledgeable about HE after the event. On average, participants rated the Academic Research Session 7/10 for 'usefulness'	Data suggests a positive impact
Become	Engage with academic and personal support mechanisms	Personal Statement Session	Participants rate the Personal Statement Session as useful	On average, participants rated the Personal Statement Session 8.9/10 for 'usefulness'	Data suggests a positive impact
Become	Interact with academic staff and other university employees	Whole Event	Evident from active engagement with the event	93% of participants would recommend the event to a friend, suggesting they engaged positively with university staff	Data suggests a positive impact

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Related Element of the Event	Success Indicator	Evaluation Data	Outcome
Become	Interact with other students on programme, Student Ambassadors and current students	Whole Event Information Fair Campus Tour	Evident from active engagement with the event	93% of participants would recommend the event to a friend, suggesting they engaged positively with Student Ambassadors	Data suggests a positive impact
Become	Access the information, advice & guidance they need to make a successful transition to HE	Whole Event	Participants agree that, as a result of this activity, they feel more confident speaking to people about my future and my options	56% of participants either 'agree' or 'strongly agree' that they feel more confident speaking to people about their future options after the event. 32% selected 'Neither agree nor disagree'	Data suggests positive impact for over half of the participants

The data suggests that the event had a positive impact against three NERUPI pillars: *Know*, *Choose* and *Become*. With success defined as over 70% ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ responses on the Likert scale survey or with a mean ‘usefulness’ score of 70% and above. Performance against outcomes, measured using the success indicators, has been rated green (positive impact suggested), amber (some evidence of positive impact) and red (positive impact not attributed) dependent on both the outcome scores from the data and the availability of evaluation data related to the intended outcome.

Participants stated they felt more knowledgeable about higher education as a result of the Mock Open Day and all sessions scored an average of at least 7/10 for ‘usefulness’, suggesting that participants obtained new knowledge in the following areas:

- HE Student Accommodation (mean score 9/10)
- Student Finance and Budgeting (9.5/10)
- Student Life (9.4/10)
- ‘What to Expect at University’ (9.3/10)
- How to Make the Most of an Open Event (9.3/10)
- Academic Research (7/10)
- Application Personal Statements (8.9/10)
- How to Find and Choose Open Days (9.3/10)

Of the five outcomes rated ‘amber’, only one was due to the evidence suggesting there had been limited positive impact. This was the ‘usefulness’ of the Academic Research Talk, where anecdotal evidence suggested that students did not find the talk as useful when it was related to a subject they have little interest in (NERUPI, 2020). The other four outcomes rated amber were due to the questions asked in the post-event survey not closely aligning to the NERUPI objective. This is an area for improvement for future evaluation design for this activity. A further recommendation would be to introduce mid-activity intercepts or ‘talking heads’ to capture qualitative data to bolster the quantitative post-intervention survey. For example, participants could be asked during the Information Fair about the institutions they have spoken with, and course information they have collected in order to make an assessment of whether participants are successfully evaluating different types of Higher Education

Institution in terms of personal interests and career aspirations (NERUPI *Choose*). The addition of less structured, qualitative evaluation would also enable the evaluator to capture any unintended outcomes of the session, be this within the NERUPI evaluation framework or beyond. Overall, however, the data collected within the Mock Open Day evaluation suggests that the intervention has positively impacted the participants in relations to HE knowledge, confidence and capacity to navigate the higher education sector.

4.4 A multi-intervention evaluative study: Project Dare

‘Project Dare’ is an employability initiative delivered in partnership with the charity York Cares, who facilitate local employers to host the project on a voluntary basis (York Cares, 2019). Student Ambassadors from a FutureHY partner university also supported the sessions, at least one of which per project was delivered on site at the University of York. The projects in this evaluation each consisted of three half-day sessions, with students from Year 10 in attendance. The participant number varied between a total of 18 and 25 students and each project had students from two schools participating. This was an integral part of the programme design to encourage communication and teamwork skills as the participants would be working with students from different schools, often from over 30 miles away from each other.

One of the primary aims of Project Dare was to “provide real life work experience involving; problem solving, team building and developing practical skills”. Not only can these skills be used on job, college and Higher Education applications to “make the students stand out from the crowd” (FutureHY, 2018b), they will also help participants learn about the working world and hear about the educational experiences of the hosting company’s employees. As each project was hosted by a different employer, the theme of the project and the tasks involved varied but the overarching structure of Project Dare is the same; a subject-related session which involved familiarisation with the subject area and ‘ice breaker’ activities to develop the teams, a challenge where groups were given a brief which they had to work through and present at the end, and a visit to the host organisation to learn about industry and meet employees from a range of job roles. The primary evaluative data collection for Project Dare

included pre and post methods in the form of an outcome star, where participants scored their agreement with a number of statements before the first session and following the final session. This is completed on one sheet of paper, in two different colours, with the idea being a potentially smaller star in the beginning and a larger star around it at the end, which shows where the participants feel they have developed skills, knowledge or confidence in certain area. Project Dare focusses on the *Become*, *Practise* and *Understand* elements of the FutureHY Progression Framework. This study draws on the data from the Project Dare evaluation report for 2017-18, which included five Project Programmes from across the academic year hosted by employers in the City of York and North Yorkshire regions (FutureHY 2018c). All five studies utilised the same outcome star evaluation sheet, which meant outcome data could be amalgamated for the year of projects.

4.4.1 Project Dare #1: Was hosted by Benenden and the them was mental health and wellbeing. The task and presentation involved marketing and mental health. The overall results for the project were as follows (red indicates pre and green indicates post-project responses in agreement with the statements, scored 1- 10):

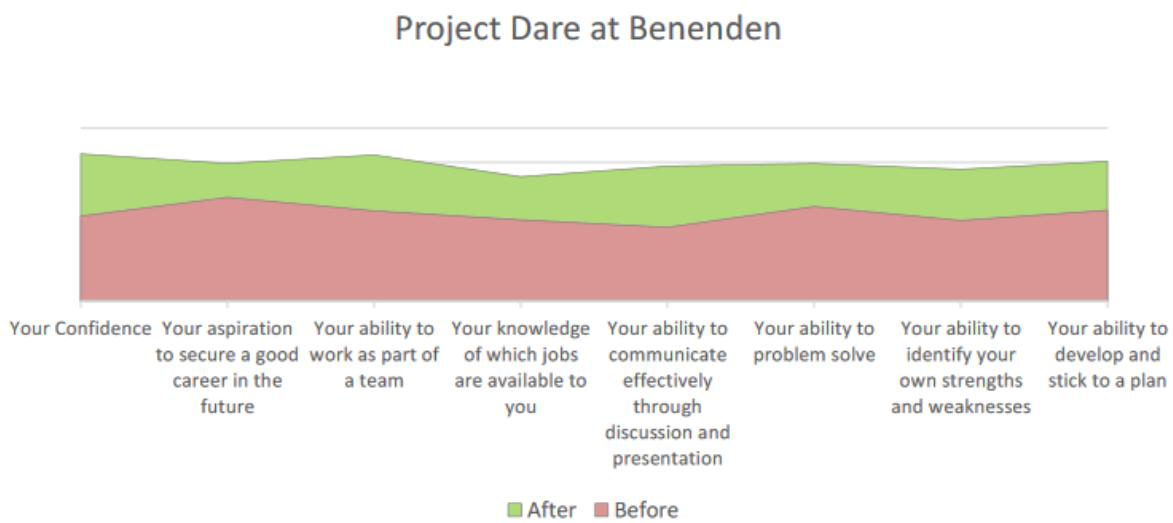


Figure 4.4: Project Dare Benenden Evaluation

The largest marked increase was in confidence levels, whereas the smallest increase related to career aspirations (although this aspect did have one of the higher levels of agreement pre-activity). Participants also reflected on the project following the final session and reported that they learned “how to communicate better” and how to “[work] as a team with people I didn’t know”. Another participant stated that they had learned “how to successfully write a CV”. All of these qualitative responses show positive outcomes in relation to the framework objective *Practise* including the development of communication and presentation skills, and the expansion of team-working and leadership skills.

4.4.2 Project Dare #2 had an engineering theme and was hosted by ARUP. The task was to design part of a new high-speed rail route and present to a panel.

Project Dare at ARUP (February 2018)

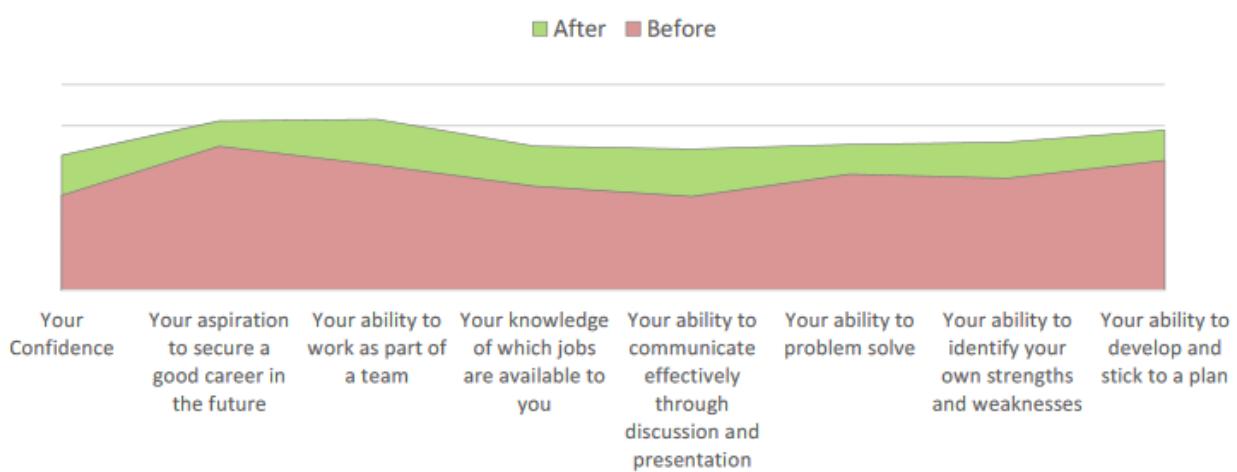


Figure 4.5: Project Dare ARUP Evaluation

There was a similar pattern of responses to the first Project Dare, with a marked increase in all areas. Participants in this project had higher ‘agreement’ scores with the statements prior to the intervention. Participants also responded in a qualitative manner post-intervention. As

before, teamwork featured positively. In addition, participants reported an increased knowledge in “fields of engineering”, which suggests some contextualisation of subject knowledge in line with the *Understand* element of the framework. A number of responses also discussed learning about job opportunities and routes, which links with the *Know* strand of the framework. This was not a specifically intended outcome of the sessions in terms of the evaluation framework, although it does link to one of the questions asked in the primary data collection.

4.4.3 Project Dare #3 was hosted by insurance company Aviva. The task involved concepts around savings and insurance in the future.

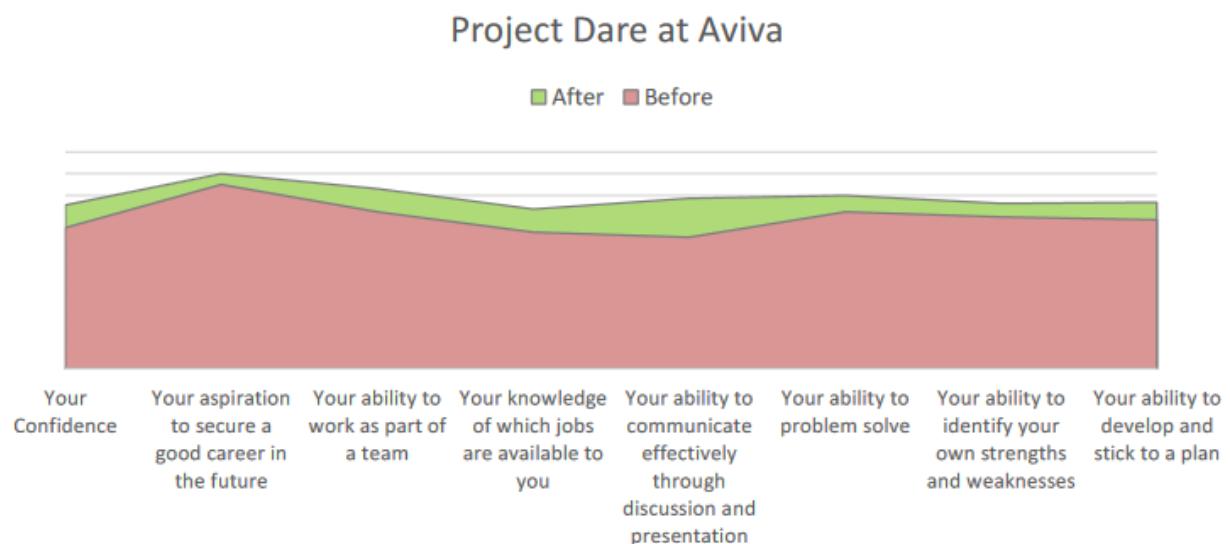


Figure 4.6: Project Dare Aviva Evaluation

FutureHY, 2018c, p.9.

Once again, positive changes were yielded across all areas, despite participants generally being in agreement with the statement pre-activity. Teamwork featured in the qualitative responses, as did confidence and public speaking, linking to the *NERUPI* pillars *Become* and *Practise*.

4.4.4 Project Dare #4 saw students visit charity the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) which involved a task around designing a self-build property with a £100k budget whilst considering environmental, social and economic aspects.

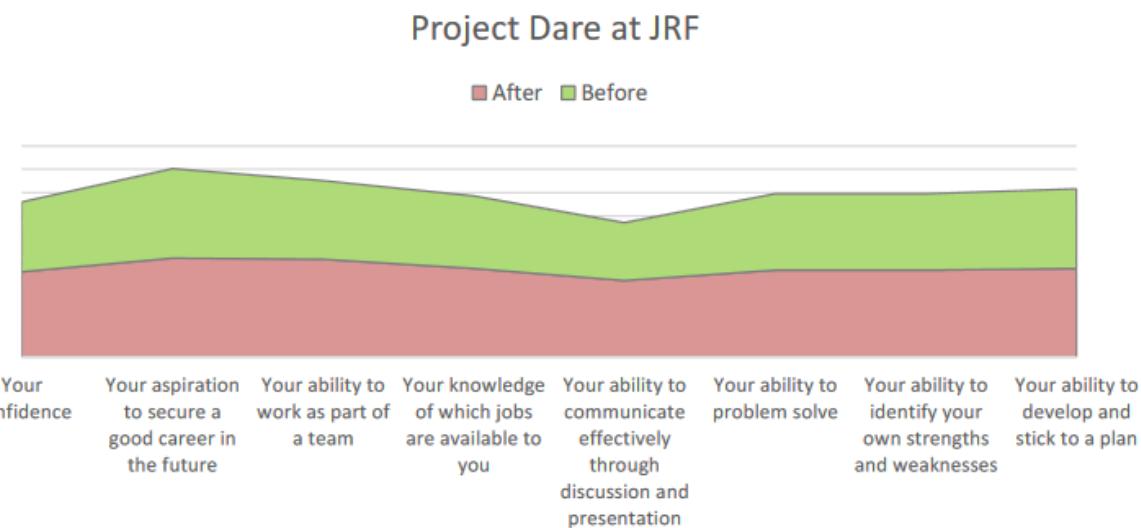


Figure 4.7: Project Dare JRF Evaluation

FutureHY, 2018c, p.11.

This cohort of students presented a marked increase across all areas in the outcome star. Participants suggest the greatest gains came in areas around communication and presentation, and teamwork. The qualitative responses mainly discussed a growth in confidence (NERUPI *Become*), with again narrative around learning about careers and progression routes, suggesting positive outcomes against the unintended objective of *Know*.

4.4.5 Project Dare #5, the final project of 2018, was hosted by the City of York Council (CYC) and was themed around democracy and decision making. The task was to create a digital resource to involve young people in the voting process.

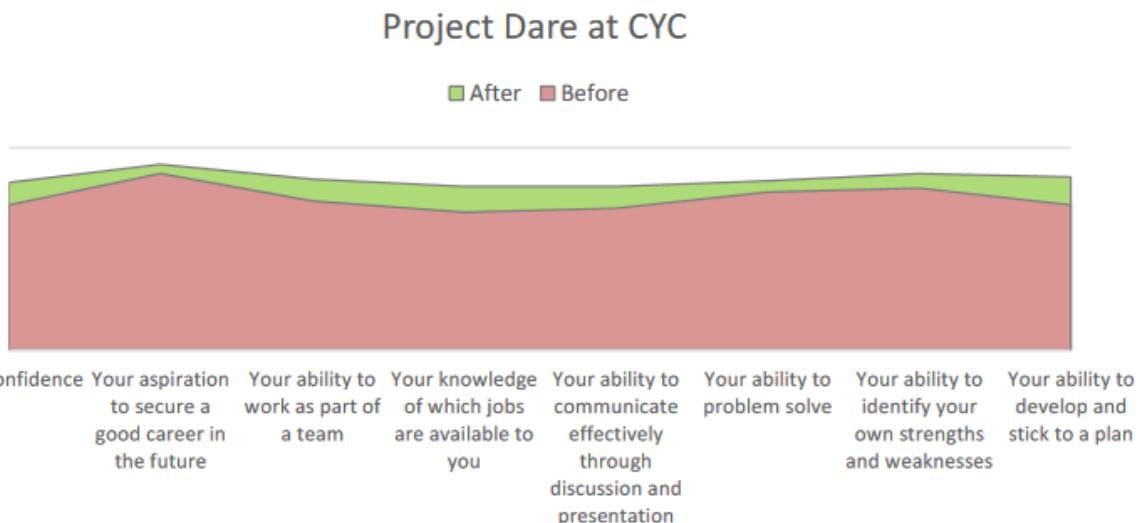


Figure 4.8: Project Dare CYC Evaluation

FutureHY, 2018c, p.15.

Despite students reporting high levels of agreement with the statements pre-activity, every aspect of the evaluation yielded positive results. Post-intervention, participants once again described how they had learned a lot about careers, as well as discussing an increase in confidence levels.

This particular Project Dare included a follow-up activity where the two winning teams from the initial task were invited back to the council to professionally film their campaigns. In the follow-up evaluation 80% of students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt more confident talking to new people and 100% claimed they now felt more confident in their ability to communicate effectively through discussion and presentation as a result of the intervention. This once again suggests the NERUPI objectives around *Become* have been met.

4.4.6 Evaluating Project Dare as a collective.

The *Project Dare 2017-2018 Report* (FutureHY 2018c) illustrated the aggregated outcome star data for the Project Dare interventions delivered in 2017 and 2018.

Project Dare Overall Impact

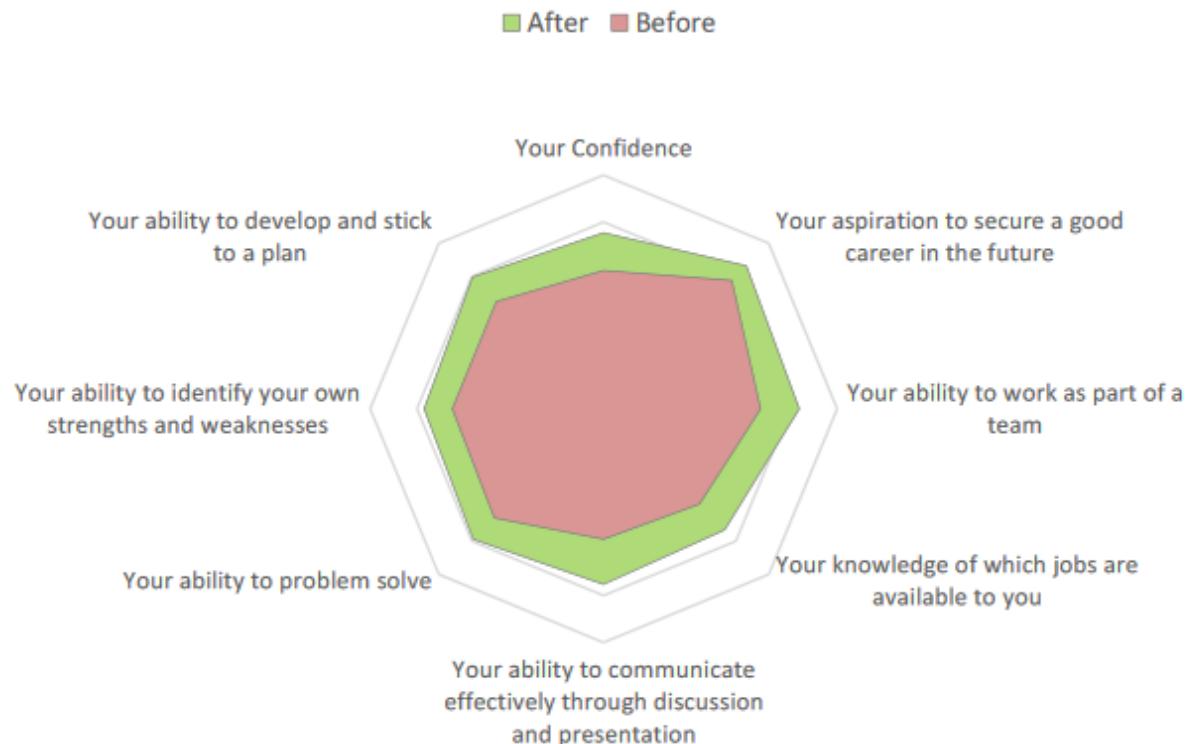


Figure 4.9: Project Dare Overall Evaluation

FutureHY, 2018c, p.2.

The outer grey ring on the 'star' represents participants agreeing with the statements a 10 out of 10. It is evident, that even when participants began with relatively high aspirations for their future career, that the project still had a positive impact. Confidence and communication skills were the key positive outcomes, with the biggest increases in agreement with the related statements.

Using the positive shift in agreement with the evaluative statements as success indicators, the collective outcomes of the project dare initiative have been mapped against its' objectives in the FutureHY Progressions Framework (Appendix A.). Qualitative responses included in the primary report, along with additional narrative about the programme content have also been included where this supports outcomes have been met:

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Success Indicator	Outcome
Become	Become familiar with a university setting and learning and teaching approaches in Higher Education	The first day of each project was hosted at a university and supported by student ambassadors	Narrative suggests outcome has been met
Become	Establish a positive association with Higher Education	N/A	No data available to specifically measure this outcome
Practise	Develop capacity to apply existing knowledge to problem solving	Participants reported an increase in their ability to problem solve	Data suggests a positive impact
Practise	Develop communication and presentation skills using different mediums.	Participants reported an increase in their ability to communicate effectively through discussion and presentation	Data suggests a positive impact
Practise	Develop analytic skills and capacity for creative and innovative thinking	Successful completion of group task and presentation	Narrative suggests outcome has been met
Practise	Develop and apply research skills	Successful completion of group task and presentation	Narrative suggests outcome has been met

NERUPI Pillar	Outcome (FutureHY Progression Framework)	Success Indicator	Outcome
Practise	Develop and apply project planning skills	Participants reported an increase in their ability to develop and stick to a plan	Data suggests a positive impact
Practise	Develop teamworking and leadership skills	Participants reported an increase in their ability to work as a team	Data suggests a positive impact
Understand	Discover how GCSE subject knowledge can be applied in other contexts and settings	Participants in the ARUP project stated they'd learned about different fields in engineering and related this to career options	Limited available data suggests a positive outcome
Understand	Engage in challenging educational projects which extend understanding and contextualise learning	All participants engaged in the project and completed the task – many related to GCSE subjects	Narrative suggests outcome has been met
Understand	Understand how GCSE curriculum relates to university subject areas	N/A	No data available to specifically measure this outcome

Table 4.6: Project Dare Overarching Evaluation

Overall, the projects were deemed to be successful, meeting the majority of the expected NERUPI outcomes. Where it could not be determined whether outcomes had been met this was due to the nature of the questioning in the primary data collection as opposed to evidence to suggest there had been little or no impact. The key outcome, not explicitly linked to the objectives within the framework was students' stated development of confidence as a result of this intervention. This will be taken into consideration as part of the reflexive evaluation cycle and the Progression Framework intended outcomes may be adjusted accordingly.

4.5 The FutureHY Uni Connect Programme: A Qualitative Stakeholder Evaluation

In July of 2020, with one year of funding for the Uni Connect Programme remaining, the FutureHY Project Director asked school contacts to feedback on two questions:

1. As a school/college what have been some key success points since engaging with FutureHY?
2. What would be the impact of the Uni Connect Programme ending in July 2021 on your school/college?

Responses were collated and published by FutureHY (2020).

It is acknowledged that schools are likely to respond positively as the Uni Connect funding has enabled activities to take place which regular funding would not cover. However, it has been an opportunity for teachers and school stakeholders to articulate the longer-term impact of the FutureHY project beyond the individual intervention evaluations. This qualitative feedback is therefore considered in addition to the self-reported data from intervention participants as part of the contribution analysis.

Respondent's names were removed in the primary dataset but their job title/role and the school name were included. This study has anonymised the school and ward names to ensure respondents are not identifiable as a result of use of secondary data.

In addition to the NERUPI-based Progression Framework, the teacher feedback has been considered within the overarching OfS objectives for the Uni Connect Programme. These are to:

- Reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups
- Support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education
- Support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners
- Contribute to a stronger evidence base around ‘what works’ in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

Office for Students, 2020a.

Long term data is not yet available to measure the impact of the programme in terms of reducing the HE participation gap, however an Assistant Head from one target school stated:

The project has been a major success for [X] School and [Y] School. It has had a direct impact on students from [two] Ward[s] in North Yorkshire. One example is 100% of the Year 13 students at [X] School have university offers this year. This is compared to 70% two years ago before our support with NCOP/Uni Connect

FutureHY, 2020.

The same respondent went on to suggest that without the Uni Connect Programme “fewer students would go to university” and that they would “continue to be disadvantaged” (FutureHY, 2020).

Numerous responses relate to the OfS objective around supporting informed decision-making. This includes references to information, advice and guidance (including careers interviews), university experience days and online mentoring with current university students. These statements also align with the NERUPI *Know* and *Choose* objectives.

One FE college stakeholder is quoted stating that working with FutureHY "...has helped the establishment and maintaining of valuable relationships between [our] College and a number of partner schools, colleges and community organisations". Another college-based respondent discusses how the FutureHY project has enabled employers to visit the college for careers-related events. This demonstrates performance against the OfS' collaboration objectives.

The evidence considered above suggests that the FutureHY programme has had a positive impact locally, as well as working towards the overarching OfS objectives. The FutureHY theory of change encompasses the NERUPI framework, and evaluation mapped against the NERUPI objectives is used as a measure of success of the programme. The table below has aligned extracts of the schools and colleges qualitative responses with the NERUPI objectives to demonstrate that all five key elements of the NERUPI-informed framework have been met.

NERUPI Objective	Qualitative Evidence
Know	<p>“Support with University Experience Days - These targeted visits to universities.... have engaged students with higher education in a way that wouldn’t have been possible without Future HY. Dedicated visits which are tailored to students who wouldn’t normally consider higher education has increased their aspirations and motivation for success”. (<i>Secondary School 1</i>).</p>
Choose	<p>“Excellent support for our Year 13 students in preparation for their next steps - working with students on uni applications” (<i>Secondary School with Sixth Form A</i>).</p>
Become	<p>“Online mentoring success for Y13’s - who were able to connect with and learn from high performing mentors” (<i>Secondary School Secondary School with Sixth Form B</i>).</p> <p>“Uni Connect has played such an important part of raising aspirations and confidence in a lot of our students, most notably on the Joseph Rowntree Housing Association programme [Project Dare] and also The Brilliant Club” (<i>Secondary School 2</i>).</p>
Practise	<p>“the students have benefitted from workshops such as small steps big difference, and study skills” (<i>Secondary School 3</i>). N.b. The Small Steps, Big Difference Programme teaches students how to make small changes to their lifestyle/routine (both physically and mentally) to support academic attainment.</p>

Understand	<p>“...online revision materials – These have had a huge impact on student participation and engagement in revision activities. GCSE Pod and Seneca are online platforms which are especially engaging for some of our most hard to reach students... and we have seen a marked increase in engagement with revision activities, and therefore outcomes have improved” (<i>Secondary School 1</i>). This response also links with <i>Practise</i>.</p>
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Table 4.7: Mapping School Responses with NERUPI

The broad-reaching nature of the FutureHY programme is captured by the school and college stakeholder responses, suggesting that a sustained multi-intervention approach, tailored to the NERUPI objectives, enables participants to develop the tools to navigate the HE sector and progress to university. This is evident in the response of one coastal school in North Yorkshire:

The help that Uni Connect provides in so many different formats is invaluable. You only need to look at the impact that it has on our students' grades, confidence and abilities!

(FutureHY, 2020).

This evidence could support a follow up study mapping students' participation in the FutureHY programme with progression to HE, whilst considering self-reported 'likelihood to enter HE' pre-programme.

It is envisaged that, along with the intervention evaluation data, the stakeholder responses will bolster the evidence base of 'what works in WP'. By highlighting the areas of the project schools believe have had the most impact on their learners, this prompts evaluators to undertake further collection and analysis of data to determine 'what works'.

The table below maps areas from both the individually examined interventions and the qualitative schools and colleges evaluation where a positive relationship between an intervention and an overarching NERUPI objective has been identified. If, as the assumption in the FutureHY Theory of Change (FutureHY, 2019) states, that overcoming barriers laid out in the framework encourages progression to HE, then the enabling aspects achieved by these interventions could result in young people being more likely to make an application to higher education as a result of participation in the FutureHY programme.

KNOW	CHOOSE	BECOME	PRACTISE	UNDERSTAND
Mock Open Day	Mock Open Day	Exam Prep Workshop	Exam Prep Workshop	Project Dare
University Visit Days	University Application Support	Mock Open Day	Project Dare	Online platforms such as GCSE Pod
		Project Dare	Small Steps, Big Difference Workshops	
		Online Mentoring	Study Skills Workshops	

Table 4.8: Overall Evidence of Impact

The evidence from the three selected FutureHY outreach interventions demonstrates how, in different ways, the programme is producing positive short-medium term outcomes in line with the NERUPI evaluation framework and, subsequently, the FutureHY Progression Framework (Appendix A.). The qualitative evidence from schools and colleges contributes to the evidence base by supporting the earlier findings and by indicating that these may result in positive medium-longer term outcomes for participants in areas such as academic attainment and, eventually, progression to higher education. Further evidence, particularly in relation to Key Stage 4 academic outcomes and higher education progression statistics are now required needed to demonstrate positive overall outcome in relation to the FutureHY theory of change and OfS Uni Connect Programme objectives.

5 Conclusion

The purpose of this evaluative research paper was to firstly explore key elements of the current policy and practice context within widening participation in the English higher education sector. This was followed by an analysis of theories which are used to underpin both WP outreach design and evaluation. This then led to the introduction of the NERUPI Framework, which synthesises theory and practitioner expertise in a reflexive evaluation cycle. Existing studies were analysed to demonstrate policy enactment and the practical utilisation of WP theory. This justified the use of the NERUPI evaluation framework in the

evaluative element of this study and link to other ‘success measures’ such as the TASO and OfS standards of evaluation (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020).

The evaluative study focussed on evidencing the impact of the Uni Connect Programme in York & North Yorkshire to date. Utilising a theory of change and the NERUPI Bourdieu-informed evaluation framework, secondary evaluation reports for three significant FutureHY outreach interventions, along with overarching qualitative responses from school and college staff, were examined to measure local impact through a contribution analysis.

5.1 Overall Contribution to Knowledge

In the former sections of this paper, the synthesis of the current policy context and practical application of WP theory demonstrated the complexities of designing, delivering, and evaluating a programme of widening participation interventions, particularly when seeking to circumvent the trap of a ‘deficit’-based approach. The utilisation of the NERUPI framework, which integrates theories of Bourdieu and Freire, established the importance of being guided by academic theory and practitioner knowledge and experience in order to develop a programme which rejects a deficit model perspective. By adopting NERUPI within the FutureHY Progression Framework, activities are designed to ‘enable’ participants to overcome perceived barriers to HE (based on Bourdieusian theory) which are evaluated and revisited as part of a reflexive cycle.

This study has demonstrated the outcomes outlined in the FutureHY Progression Framework and Theory of Change have been successfully met as a result of the interventions presented in this evaluation. Further research is now needed to fully evaluate impact by following these outcomes through to HE participation. This could be achieved by tracking individual learners through the programme.

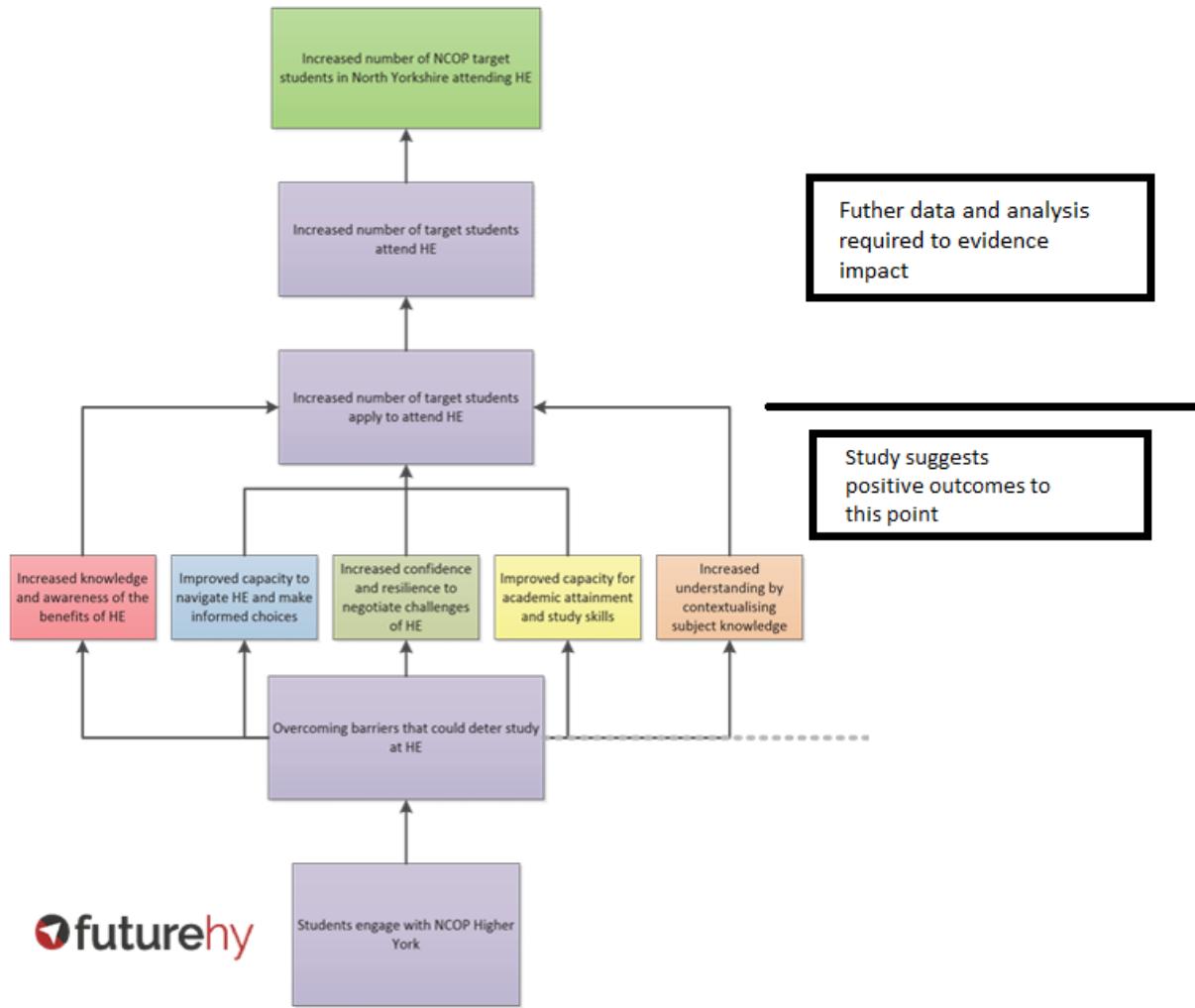


Figure 5.1: Level of Evaluation Mapped to the FutureHY Logic Model

5.2 Implications for theory and research

This study has evidenced a number of WP interventions yielding outcomes in accordance to the NERUPI Framework. The assumptions within the FutureHY Logic Model expect that, by overcoming the barriers defined (using the Bourdieu-informed NERUPI framework), that progression to HE will increase. The study has contributed to the knowledgebase of 'what works' in widening participation in terms of the types of activities that may develop the habitus and types of capital defined by Bourdieu. This will be foundational work for further research, potentially from a realist perspective, to explore *why* these interventions are producing the positive outcomes, and for whom and in what contexts? There is also a clear

scope to research the link between these positive outcomes and progression to HE to clearly determine the impact of the FutureHY Uni Connect Programme.

Implications for future research are bound by issues explored in this paper about to draw conclusions on 'cause and effect' (Hayton and Stevenson, 2018). This study has addressed potential conflicts of approach in relation OfS and TASO 'standards of evidence' and the issues surrounding randomised control trials. A fundamental objective of this study was to balance practical and ethical considerations with the generation of the most valid and robust data possible.

5.3 Implications in relation to practice

From a practitioner perspective this study has highlighted the importance of evaluation as a reflexive cycle. By utilising indicators to assess whether interventions have met the objectives set out in the FutureHY Progression Framework, along with methods designed to capture unintended or unexpected outcomes, it is clear how both the Progression Framework and programme design and delivery must be reviewed and adapted regularly in-line with the evaluative evidence. This is also a practical lesson from an evaluator's perspective as, when reviewing programme outcomes, evaluation design must also be critiqued and adapted to ensure the most useful and robust data is being captured and analysed effectively to successfully demonstrate programme impact.

5.4 Policy implications

The consideration of programme outcomes, not only in relation to the FutureHY Progression Framework but with the Office for Students' policy-led objectives has potential to support the case for future funding for the Uni Connect Programme at a national level. This paper has demonstrated the clear contribution of the FutureHY programme in York and North Yorkshire in three of the four programme objectives:

1. Reduce the gap in higher education participation between the most and least represented groups.
2. Support young people to make well-informed decisions about their future education.
3. support effective and impactful local collaboration by higher education providers working together with schools, colleges, employers and other partners.
4. Contribute to a stronger evidence base around 'what works' in higher education outreach and strengthen evaluation practice in the sector.

Office for Students, 2020a.

It is anticipated that upcoming HESA data releases will be able to evidence progression against the first objective which, unfortunately, was outside of the scope of this study.

5.5 Methodological reflections

From a methodological perspective, important lessons have been learned with regards to evidencing impact in widening participation. The introduction of the standards of evidence (Robinson & Salvestrini, 2020, p.13), favoured by bodies such as the Office for Students and TASO prompted discussion about evidencing causality and the ethical and practical restrictions of experimental primary research methods such as RCTS, which have been hailed as 'gold standard'. This does, however, still highlight the need for clearly measuring change and ensuring robust pre and post measures regardless of the methodological approach.

Another methodological issue highlighted in the use of secondary datasets was the occasional imparity between the objectives of a programme or intervention, particularly when aligned to a framework such as NERUPI, and the questions asked in evaluation forms. This made it difficult to clearly assign success indicators to some of the intended outcomes as the survey was not providing data that related to one or more of the objectives from the FutureHY Progression Framework. This issue has primarily arisen as, by utilising secondary data, the evaluator was unable to determine what questions they required responses for.

5.6 Limitations of the study

The limitations of this study were predominantly a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. The original research design planned to incorporate primary research methods. This would have enabled the evaluator to ask specific questions in-line with the framework and the research objectives of this paper. The closing of schools and colleges all but eliminated the potential to access both students and teachers to participate in this study. This subsequently led to time constraints in undertaking the secondary research. It is, however, acknowledged that, by collecting and analysing the data in this manner, this study has been able to provide a contributory analysis of the impact of the FutureHY Uni Connect Programme in York and North Yorkshire which demonstrates many positive outputs and, at least, short to medium term outcomes for participants.

5.7 Potential for future research

It is anticipated that this study will lay the foundations for future evaluative research in this area. By highlighting areas of the programme which are suggested to yield positive outcomes for participants there is the opportunity for further research exploring the mechanisms of each intervention to determine 'what works' and why. Finally, the discussion around causality and pre/post measures has prompted consideration about more holistic measuring of the programme impact. Should funding for a Phase 3 of Uni Connect be granted, there is potential to track a group of participants throughout the programme with both quantitative and qualitative intercepts at set points. This will aid the understanding of the impact of the FutureHY Uni Connect Programme as a whole and measure whether the benefits of a sustained and progressive programme are, in fact, greater than its' parts in sum.

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Appendix

Appendix A.: The FutureHY Progression Framework.

Excerpt from the FutureHY Progression Framework. The complete framework can be viewed as a PDF by downloading from the FutureHY website:

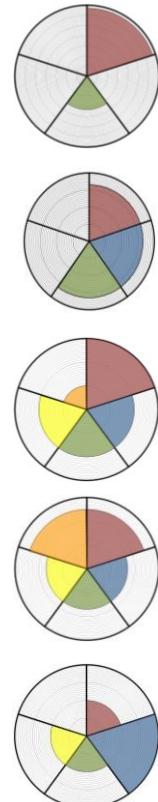
<https://www.futurehy.co.uk/about/evaluation/> (Accessed 15 September 2020).

NCOP FutureHY Progression Framework



Level 1 (Year 9)

		Social and Academic Capital			Habitus		Skills Capital		Intellectual Capital	
Activity	Description	Know		Choose	Become	Practise		Understand		
		PT1. Develop students' knowledge and awareness of the benefits of higher education and graduate employment		PT4. Develop students' capacity to navigate Higher Education and graduate employment sectors and make informed choices	PT.7 Develop students' confidence and resilience to negotiate the challenge of university life and graduate progression	PT9. Develop students' study skills and capacity for academic attainment and successful graduate progression		PT10. Develop students' understanding by contextualising subject knowledge and supporting attainment raising		
1.1. Programme Launch Event	An interactive launch event for students in Year 9 to welcome them to FutureHY. Students will take part in activities about Higher Education and learn more about the programme.	Reflect on Post-16 options and benefits of Higher Education	Understand how GCSEs relate to post-16 study	Understand how Higher Education relates to future career opportunities	Consider GCSE qualifications within the context of academic, vocational and 'work-based' post-16 progression routes into Higher Education.	Consider routes through Higher Education into careers, occupations and job families	Reflect on personal circumstances, interests, characteristics and aptitudes and how they are influencing academic and employment aspirations	Identify personal qualities, strengths and attributes that are required to realise future ambitions.	Reflect on existing skills, capacities and areas of expertise	Reflect on skills, capacities and expertise needed to progress towards future ambitions
1.2. Campus Visit	A visit to a partner HE provider to familiarise Year 9 and 10 students with the HE environment.								Consider how GCSE subject knowledge can be developed and applied within a variety of post-16 settings	Relate GCSE subject knowledge to university subject areas
1.3. STEM for Girls Workshop	"People like me" sessions for female students in Year 9, designed to encourage them to consider STEM courses and careers. Delivered by NYBEP with female STEM Ambassadors from local employers									
1.4 Mentoring	A 10 week programme for students in Year 9 to help them make confident GCSE choices. Students will be mentored by undergraduates from our partner HE institutions.									



NCOP FutureHY Progression Framework

<u>Level 1 (Year 9)</u>		Social and Academic Capital			Habitus		Skills Capital		Intellectual Capital		
		Know		Choose	Become		Practise	Understand			
Activity	Description	Understand how GCSE study relates to Higher Education and future career opportunities		Choose GCSE subject choices that correspond with personal and career interests	Explore how personal circumstances, interests and characteristics influence academic and employment aspirations		Identify skills and capacities they will need to develop to achieve future aspirations	Consider how GCSE subject knowledge can be applied and developed in post-16 educational and employment contexts		Access and experience appropriate attainment-raising interventions	
1.6. Flood a School	A group of current undergraduates will shadow a teacher in school and talk to classes about their course and career plans. They will be matched to relevant teachers by subject.	Reflect on Post-16 options and benefits of Higher Education	Understand how GCSEs Relate to post-16 study	Understand how Higher Education relates to future career opportunities	Consider GCSE qualifications within the context of academic, vocational and 'work-based' post-16 progression routes into Higher Education.	Consider routes through Higher Education into careers, occupations and job families	Reflect on personal circumstances, interests, characteristics and aptitudes and how they are influencing academic and employment aspirations	Reflect on existing skills, capacities and areas of expertise	Reflect on skills, capacities and expertise needed to progress towards future ambitions	Consider how GCSE subject knowledge can be developed and applied within a variety of post-16 settings	Relate GCSE subject knowledge to university subject areas
1.7. Small Steps, Big Difference	A workshop for students in Year 9-11 which aims to give students awareness of where they are in terms of their wellbeing and then identify areas in which they could improve upon using the 'Wellbeing Checker'.										
1.8. Creative Forces Day	A visit to University of York for students in Year 9 from Military Service backgrounds, to give a taste of what Higher Education is like, and meet other students from the same background.										
1.9. Subject Specific Stem Workshops	A workshop for female students focusing on specific STEM related subjects, and encouraging students to consider STEM courses and careers.										

