Method:	Evaluation Wheel

NERUPI network
Evaluating & Researching University Participation Interventions

Description:

An Evaluation Wheel is a visual tool that is completed collaboratively by students in conjunction with staff in schools, colleges or HEIs including careers advisers, Uni Connect advisers, WP outreach professionals, trained ambassadors or mentors, student support staff. The tool uses ratings scales which are completed periodically for example as part of an initial assessment, review meeting and perhaps at a final meeting, over a period of time (e.g. an academic year). The tool includes different dimensions (e.g. a five-pointed star) with each dimension described with 'I' statements and with supporting definitions (e.g. relating to students' understanding, level of personal development and knowledge of HE).

Application:

Links to phases of the NERUPI Framework that are focused on changes in individuals and therefore potentially applicable to most 'Know', 'Choose', 'Understand' and 'Become' objectives and potentially can be applied within the six NERUPI levels.

Type of evidence:

Quantitative. OfS Type 2 Empirical (pre/post).

Strengths:

This is a developmental tool as well as an evaluation tool. It is generally embedded into activities and is designed to help participants to identify their strengths and areas for development where support may be focused. The approach can be built into the delivery of a programme of activity to the students (i.e. naturally occurring data rather than an 'add on').

It is a multi-dimensional tool covering multiple objectives in a fairly in-depth way (and which can help to identify changes in 'soft-outcomes') particularly with respect to personal development which can often be difficult to measure.

This is a visual tool which helps to spark conversations between students and widening participation practitioners and can help students to get on board with activities/interventions.

The tool focuses on the bigger picture rather than small scale changes (i.e. the idea could be to see the individual impact of particular activities, but also to gather data on the collective impact across a programme of activity and the overall learning journey rather than a specific activity).

The tool is capable of use in different ways/adaptable and can be tailored to the outcomes of interest to practitioners and students (e.g. students can choose to start on a particular area of the tool which feels most useful to them, and choose to park others if needed).

This is a 'strengths' based tool which allows students to look back and reflect on their own progress with the capacity to enable students to return to the tool and review their own progress.

Weaknesses:

Answers may be exaggerated and various biases may affect the results, like social desirability bias. When completed by practitioners the tool is open to confirmation bias and could be prone to abuse from practitioners if they use it to document what they want to see rather than actual scores.

The tool is rather time and resource intensive, and therefore probably best focused on specific groups such as a cohort in a targeted and intensive programme of activity.

It is designed to measure changes over time rather than activity specific changes and therefore only suitable for programmes of activities which go on over a period (at least three to six months).

Potentially at review students may place themselves lower on a scale, perhaps because they are being more open about how things are for them, or because participation in an activity has revealed what they don't know as much as what they do know (if scores decrease then this can be an opportunity to bring in further interventions or try something different).

If used correctly the approach can be important for individuals' engagement and support self-reflection and empowerment. However, if used incorrectly it can be tokenistic. Adequate training and procedures for ensuring objectivity need to be in place.

	The design of the tool limits the number of questions/indicators you can measure (anything over 8 key questions tends to look a little 'busy' and overcomplicated).
Mixed Methods:	The Outcomes Star works well with other methods. Combined with intervention evaluation this method can provide a compelling account of individual change in the medium term. When reporting on the Outcomes Star it is important to emphasise that it is a development tool as well as an evaluative tool.
Expertise:	Medium
Requirements:	The Outcomes Star is designed for use with a programme of activity where the Team can work with students holistically, over a period of time and (usually) with at least some element of one to one support. It also requires a sufficient number of interventions and capacity to justify the use of a multi-dimensional individual level tracking tool. This tool requires co-production between students and staff, so conditions need to be in place for ongoing contact and the opportunity for meetings/sessions focused on individuals' needs and requirements. As a model of change, the tool needs to be based on a proven theory of change, which maps areas students need to develop to improve their progression prospects. The tool needs to be underpinned by an agreed process for recording, storing and revisiting the scoring over time. This could be through the use of a learner level tracking system (which could include a CRM system, or HEAT tracking system or equivalent). Practitioners using the tool will need full training on the definitions and processes involved.
Ethical considerations:	Students should be engaged in the process on the basis of informed consent. Training and monitoring needs to be in place to mitigate potential deception or exaggeration and to provide appropriate support for students This training should not only ensure the tool is administered correctly and objectively, but also ensure respect for the sensitivity of the issues being covered. Because the tool records data on individuals, then an adequate level of confidentiality of the data needs to be in place and privacy protected. Voluntary participation and right to withdraw procedures should be in place.
Work planning:	1. Development: If you are developing a new tool there needs to be a robust process and therefore this is a substantial undertaking. Agreement of the dimensions and descriptors should be a collaborative process which draws on experts, users and subjects (the students themselves) to draft these (for example through a working group). Requires serious theory of change activity and an evidence based approach. 2. Pilot Testing: Will probably require cognitive testing in the first instance, and this will take time (at least 6 months?) during which time officers should be trained, the tool used with a large enough sample of students and data and feedback gathered. Reliability and validity tests should be run on the data before it is finalised (link to more info on retest validity and inter-rater validity?), as well as consideration of feedback from students on their experience of the tool and suggestions for improvement. 3. Training: Training needs to cover both support and evaluation. The levels of support that can be offered are to some extent dependent on the experience of staff e.g. whether they have careers, coaching or counselling qualifications. In any case training should cover basic issues such as safeguarding in 121 situations and coaching strategies. Evaluation training on the level descriptors and processes to ensure and check understanding is essential. There may need to be regular team discussions on the use of the tool to reinforce learning and check consistency in the use of the scales, or as part of the supervision process for managing the frontline delivery staff. 4. Embedding: This will depend on how the intervention or programme of activities is organised. There needs to be a process where students are introduced to the outcomes tool and get a feeling for how it works. Workers and students agree where scores sit. The process should be documented and the materials should be referred to in subsequent reviews in order to make sure the scoring takes account of how the scores have been decided. The intervention/programme should include scope to agree the

areas students want to work on and activities which can be done between completing the tool and the next time (e.g. as part of an action plan).

5. Data entry: Requires the data to be entered into a software system in order to be able to summarise and analyse the information it contains.

Analysis: The data can be presented in different ways – e.g. differences in the median scores for each scale, the number or percentage of students who improve, go backwards or stay put, distances travelled, or number and percentage of students who reach a particular landmark or target score. It is usually a good idea to identify individual changes and the shares of the total population this represents, and you could report on different cohorts or sub-groups of students separately to see which groups benefited most.

Reporting: Outcomes tool data can be used by the Praxis Teams to assess how the work is beneficial and for whom. It can be reported alongside other information – including other outcome data, and information on activities/interventions – to provide a rounded picture of the delivery and achievements.

Useful Links(s): Triangle Consulting Outcomes Star™. A licensed tool, originally designed to capture homelessness outcomes, but with subsequent tailored adaptation for different sectors, service types and service users. https://www.outcomesstar.org.uk/using-the-star/find-your-star

Youth Work Essentials Scotland: Evaluation Wheel. Describes an example activity with guidance for professionals and young people.
http://www.youthworkessentials.org/media/40344/outcomes_wheel.pdf

Evaluation Wheel: Practice example

The indicator wheel is used by Wessex Inspiration Network (WIN) Higher Education Advisers (HEAs) who work with cohorts within schools and colleges as part of Uni Connect programme collaborative arrangement. WIN wanted something, other than the Participation Survey, to measure the outcomes from the work and previous evaluation tools that had been used lacked the ability to monitor progress of individual students on their journey towards HE.

The HEAs meet 1:1 with students and during the meeting they ask questions and discuss the following areas:

- HE Awareness
- HE Choice
- Personal Development
- Study Skills
- Subject Interest

The level descriptors that have been agreed for pre-16 and post-16 are different reflecting differing levels of understanding and position within the education system. Level Descriptors for Pre 16 Version 4. Level descriptors post 16 version 4.doc

The HEAs identify which level descriptors best describe the student and give the students a score for each strand. (1-9 for pre-16 and 10-18 for post-16), using a 'best-fit' approach. The numerical value attributed to each strand is recorded by the HEA in the HEAT tracking system. Snapshots of the students HEAT records are taken at specific intervals to monitor the change in scores over time, for each student. Each time the HEA meets with the student and feels that there is a change in understanding /knowledge etc, a values on HEAT can be updated.

The WIN team considers that as the WIN programme moves through Phase 2 of the Uni Connect programme, the Indicator Wheel tool allows the partners to create a more informed programme of activities based upon the specific needs identified from the monitoring. It is seen as a solution to measuring more medium and long-term outcomes, and providing a consistent approach (above and beyond the immediate short-term impact of individual interventions).

References:
Adapted from WIN, Indicator Wheel Description