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How Key is Commitment? – Findings from Pilot Study

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My Background

Researcher for Aimhigher in LIFE Partnership

Bournemouth, Poole, Dorset, South Somerset

Main focus 13 – 19

Target - those under represented in Higher Education and have potential

MBA Research 2008

Organisational Commitment (Allen and Meyer, 1990)

Commitment towards organisational change (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002)

Findings: Quant = committed. Qual = not happy with management of change

FACE 2009

Applying management models in an educational context

Piloted at summer school



Activity!

1. How do you define commitment?



2. A couple of examples?



What is this study about?

Evaluate Aimhigher activity and answer questions

Awareness, aspirations, progression, positive learner identity

Investigate commitment

“It is intended that application and progression to Higher Education is achieved via providing an experience of HE which encourages learners in the target group to **reinforce a commitment to learning and progression to HE**”

(HEFCE 2009/11, p. 5)

Research into Summer School Impact has been Limited

Focusing on mainly staff and student perceptions

HE aspiration stairway → consolidation

(Hatt et al 2009, p. 334)



Three Component Framework (Allen and Meyer, 1990)

3 Commitment types:

1. Affective ☺ (Want, Attachment, Belonging, Internalisation)
2. Continuance ☹ (Need, Lack of alternatives, Benefits)
3. Normative 😐 (Obligation, Loyalty, Social Exchange)

8 Statements, 5 Point Likert Scale

Motives, Local foci



Three Component Framework (Allen and Meyer, 1990)

Affective Commitment

1. *Continuing with*
2. *Talking*
3. *Internalisation of problems*
4. *Others not as **attachable***
5. *Part of the **family***
6. ***Emotional** attachment*
7. ***Personal** meaning*
8. *Sense of **belonging***

Continuance Commitment

1. ***Afraid** to leave*
2. ***Difficult** to leave*
3. ***Disruptive** to leave*
4. ***Costly** to leave*
5. ***Necessity** as much as desire*
6. ***Only** option*
7. ***Few alternatives***
8. ***less benefits***

Normative Commitment

1. *Too much **changing***
2. *Believe in **loyalty***
3. ***Ethical** to be loyal*
4. *Moral **obligation***
5. *Not **right** to leave*
6. ***Values** loyalty*
7. *More people **should** stay*
8. ***Company** 'person'*



Three Component Framework (Allen and Meyer, 1990)

Affective Commitment

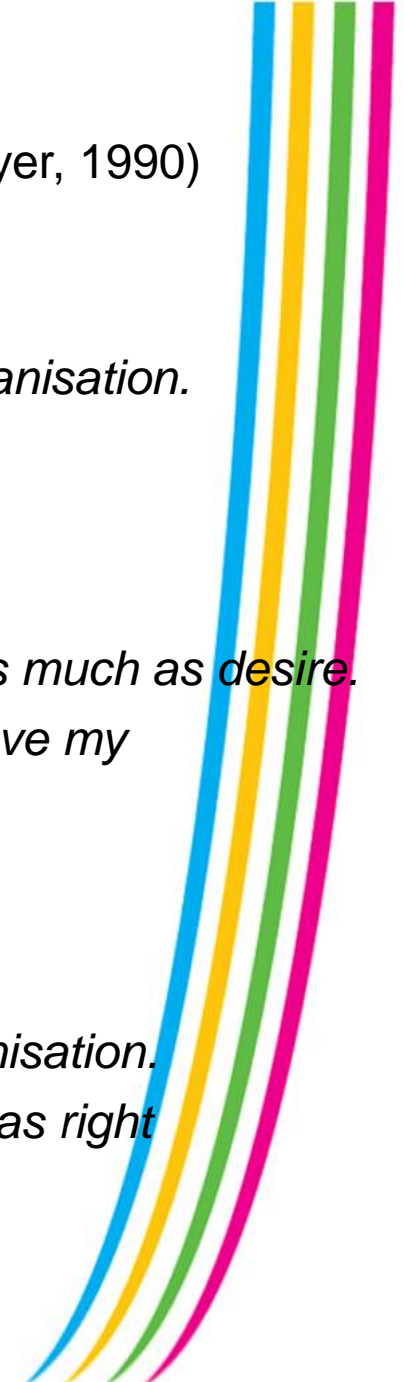
- 1. I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career with this organisation.*
- 2. I enjoy discussing my organisation with people outside it.*

Continuance Commitment

- 1. Right now, staying with my organisation is a matter of necessity as much as desire.*
- 2. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I decided I wanted to leave my organisation now.*

Normative Commitment

- 1. I was taught to believe in the value of remaining loyal to one organisation.*
- 2. If I got another offer for a better job elsewhere I would not feel it was right to leave my organisation.*



Activity!

☺ Affective Commitment (want, attachment, belonging, internalisation)

☹ Continuance Commitment (Need, lack of alternatives, benefits)

☹ Normative Commitment (Obligation, Loyalty, Social Exchange)



Educational Commitment

Affective Commitment

- 1. I would like to go on to University or Higher Education (HE).*
- 2. I enjoy talking about education.*

Continuance Commitment

- 1. I don't know what else I would do if I did not go on to University or HE*
- 2. It would be quite difficult for me not to go on to University or HE, even if I didn't want to go.*

Normative Commitment

- 1. I feel that I ought to go on to University or HE.*
- 2. If someone offered me a really good job now, I would not feel that I would need to go to University or HE. (R)*

Other

- 1. I think I will get good enough grades to go on to University or HE.*
- 2. I think I will be able to afford to go on to University or HE.*



Findings

Aimhigher (AH) - year 11 – 35 useable surveys

Bournemouth University (BU) - year 12 – 27 usable surveys

Mann-Whitney Test

(to look for differences between two independent samples)

No significant difference was found between AH yr 11 and BU yr 12 cohort.

Wilcoxon Signed Ranks Test

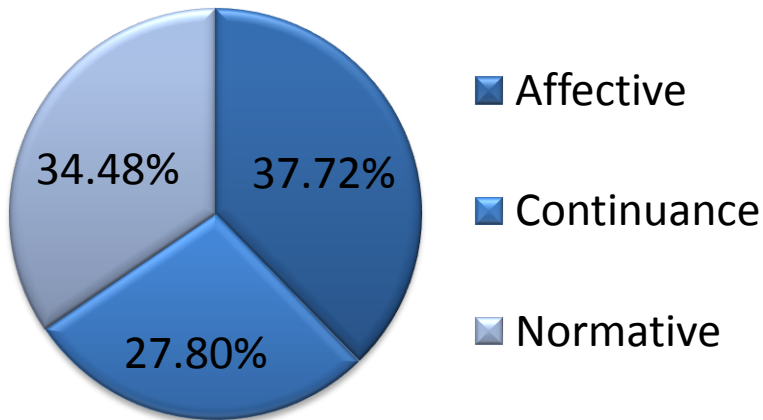
(to look for differences between related samples)

No significant difference in responses before and after in the AH cohort.

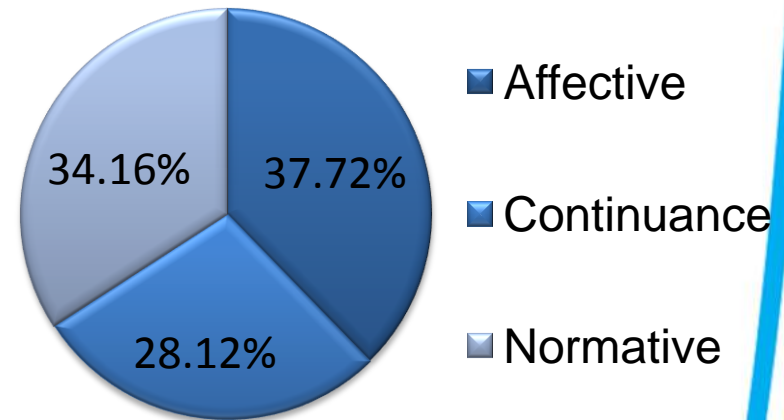


Findings

AH Pre



AH Post



Learners coming to summer school are likely to already have strong Affective Commitment, accounting for the lack of attitudinal change.



Supporting evidence

Survey findings in numbers wanting to go

Aimhigher (AH) - year 11 – 84% to 97%

Bournemouth University (BU) - year 12 – no change

Hatt et al 2009 - consolidation

- assist decision making amongst already aspiring learners

Higher Education Progression Framework Guide

“an agreed continuum of experiences..... with specific learner outcomes”

(Action on Access 2008)

Learner Progression Model:

Aspirations + Awareness + Attainment = Progression (not linear)

(The Department for Business Innovation & Skills 2010)



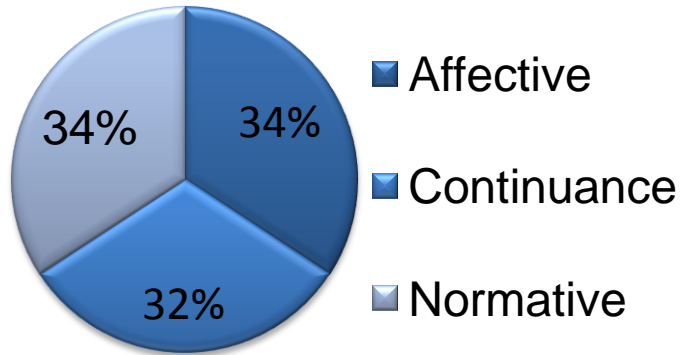
Individual Profiles

↑	18 ↑ Affective Commitment
	17 ↑ Continuance Commitment
	14 ↑ Normative Commitment
↓	7 ↓ Affective Commitment
	12 ↓ Continuance Commitment
	11 ↓ Normative Commitment
Overall	↑ Affective Commitment
	↑ Continuance Commitment
	↑ Normative Commitment Overall

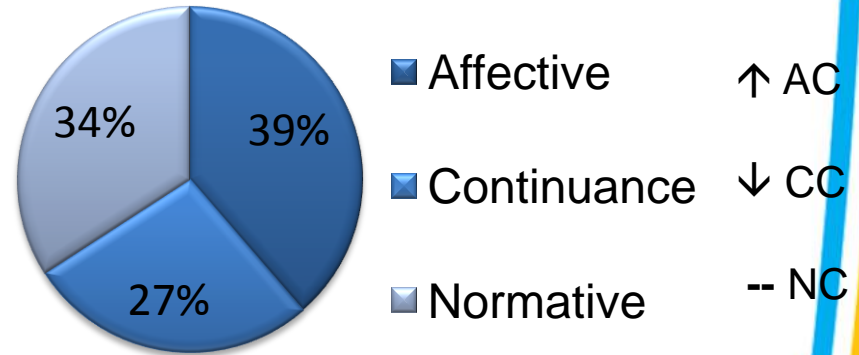


Learner 3

Pre – Profile



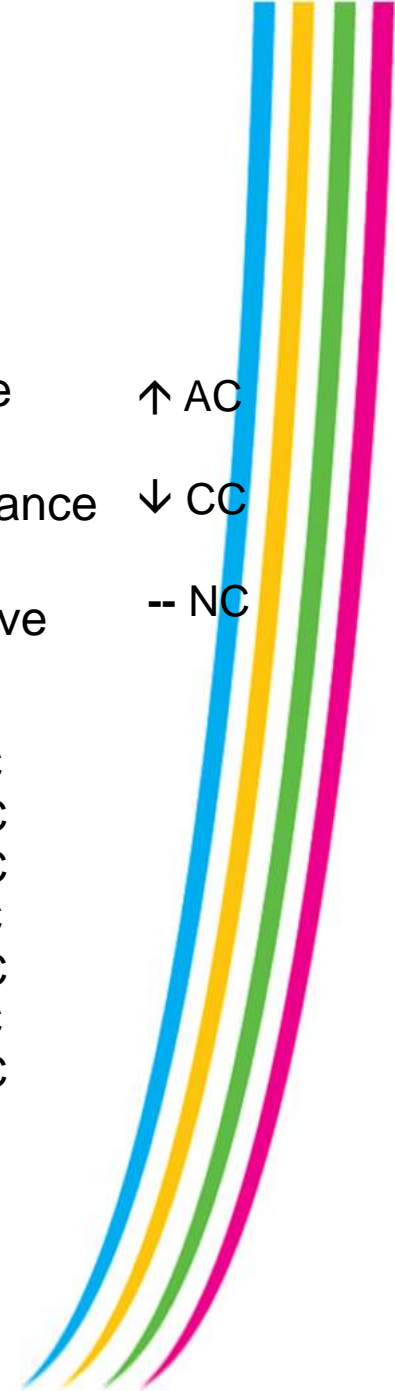
Post - Profile



Like to go HE / Uni
 Afraid might happen if don't go
 Lots of people don't go when could
 Enjoy talking about education
 Don't know what else I would do
 Future & education, my responsibility
 Feel I ought to go
 Get good enough grades

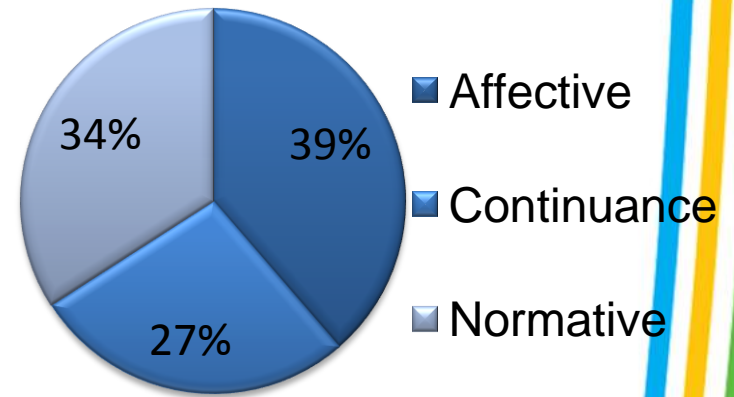
Unsure	Agree	↑ AC
Disagree	Agree	↑ CC
Unsure	Agree	↑ NC
Disagree	Agree	↑ AC
Disagree	Agree	↑ CC
Agree	S. Agree	↑ AC
Agree	S. Agree	↑ NC
Agree	Unsure	↑ O

Increased desire to go
 better understanding of the benefits of going to university or HE
 Unsure if able to afford it



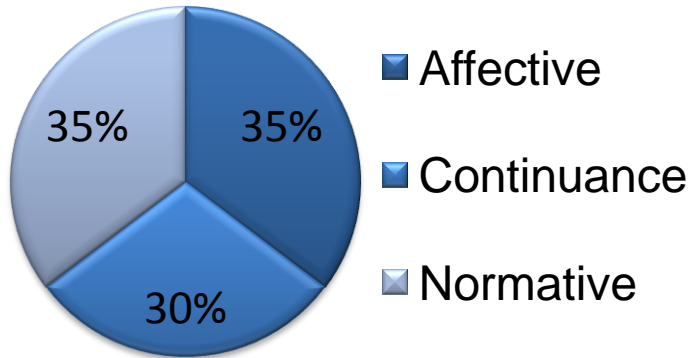
Activity!

What do the profiles tell us about summer school impact?

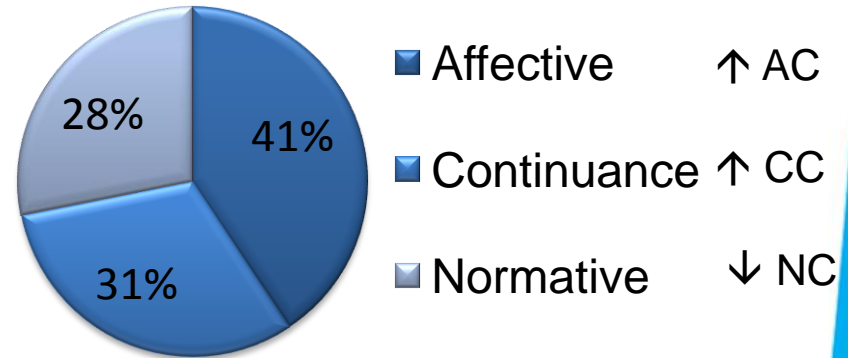


Learner 5

Pre - Profile



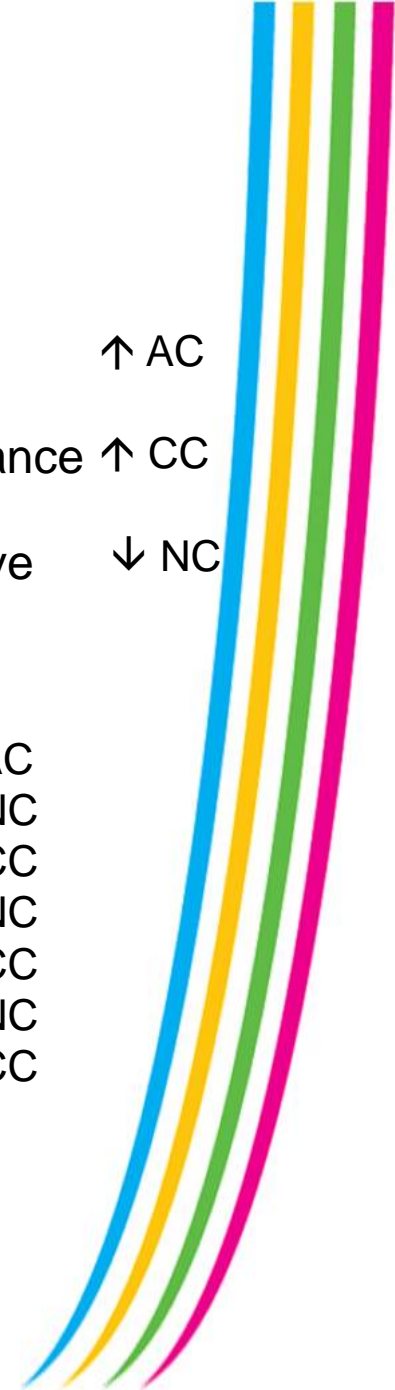
Post - Profile



Like to go HE / Uni
 Lots of people don't go when could
 Don't know what else I would do
 Can get the grades, should go
 Difficult not to go if didn't want to
 Feel I ought to go
 Feel I do not have to go ®

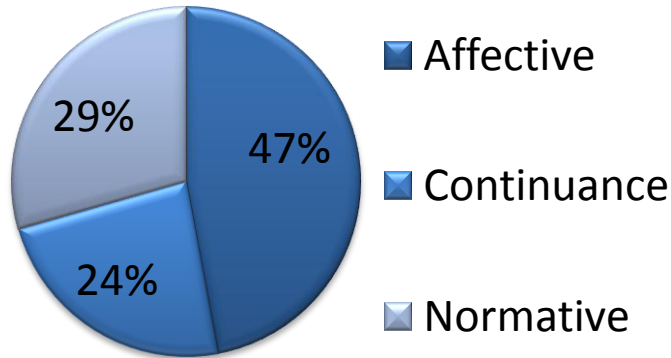
Unsure	Agree	↑ AC
Agree	Unsure	↓ NC
Disagree	Agree	↑ CC
S.Disag	Disagree	↑ NC
Disagree	Unsure	↑ CC
Unsure	Disagree	↓ NC
Unsure	Disagree	↑ CC

Increased desire to go
 Maybe has a better understanding of alternatives
 Better understanding of the benefits of going to university or HE
 Thinks it is affordable



Learner 17

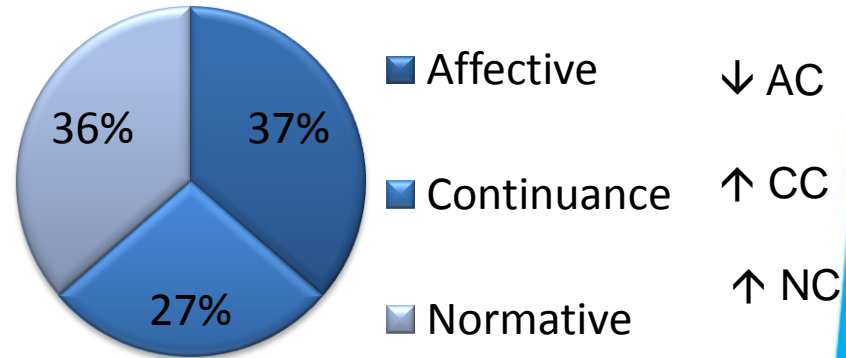
Pre - Profile



Like to go HE / Uni
 Lots of people don't go when could
 Future & education, my responsibility
 Would quickly become attached
 Feel I do not have to go ®
 Good job = would not need to go ®
 Get good enough grades
 I think I would fit in

Less feeling that they have to go
 Maybe better understanding of alternatives
 Think they will fit in

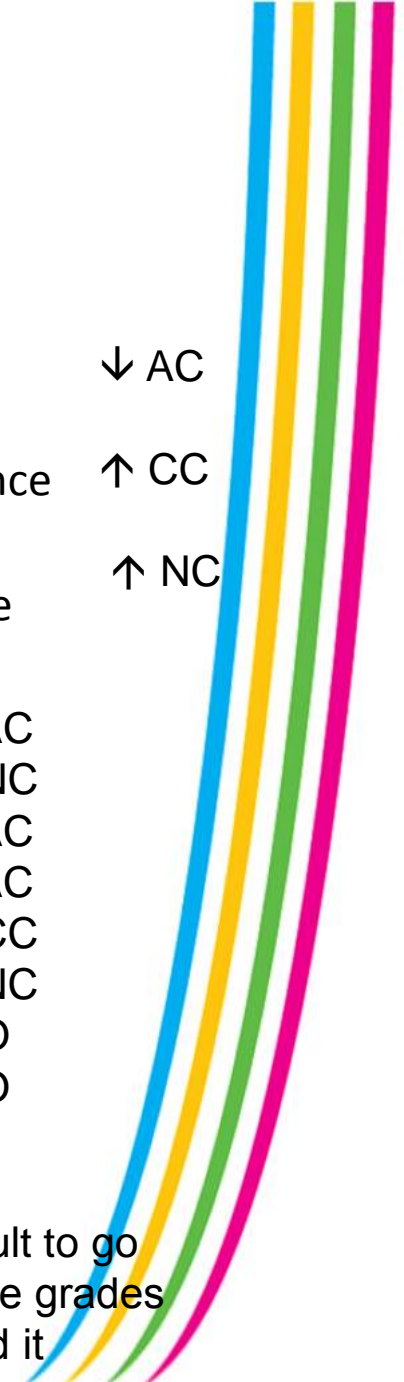
Post - Profile



Agree	Unsure	↓ AC
Unsure	Disagree	↑ NC
Agree	Unsure	↑ AC
Agree	Disagree	↓ AC
Disagree	Unsure	↓ CC
S.Disag	Agree	↓ NC
Disagree	S.Disag	↓ O
Unsure	Agree	↑ O

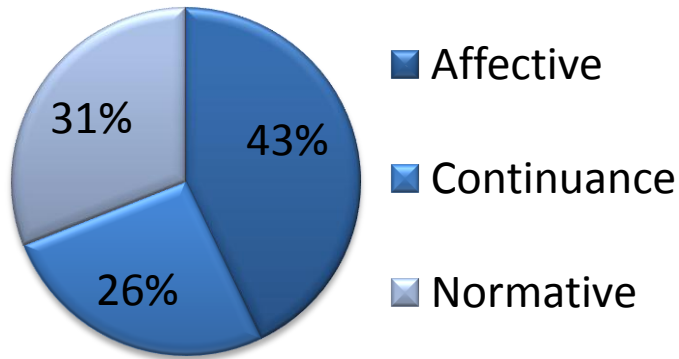
Now think it is more difficult to go
 Don't think they will get the grades
 Don't think they can afford it

↓ AC
 ↑ CC
 ↑ NC

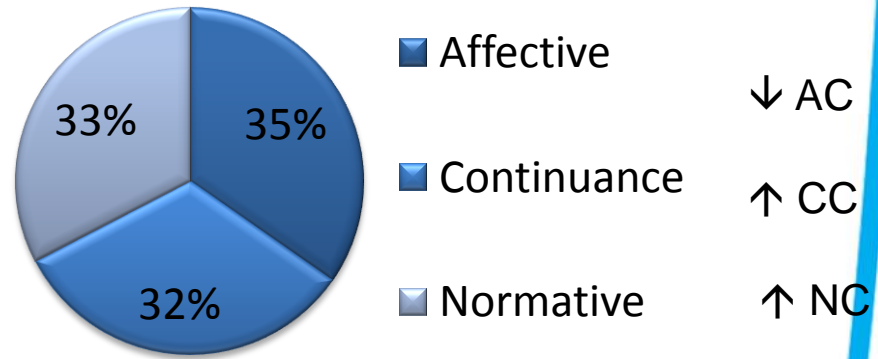


Learner 24

Pre - Profile



Post - Profile



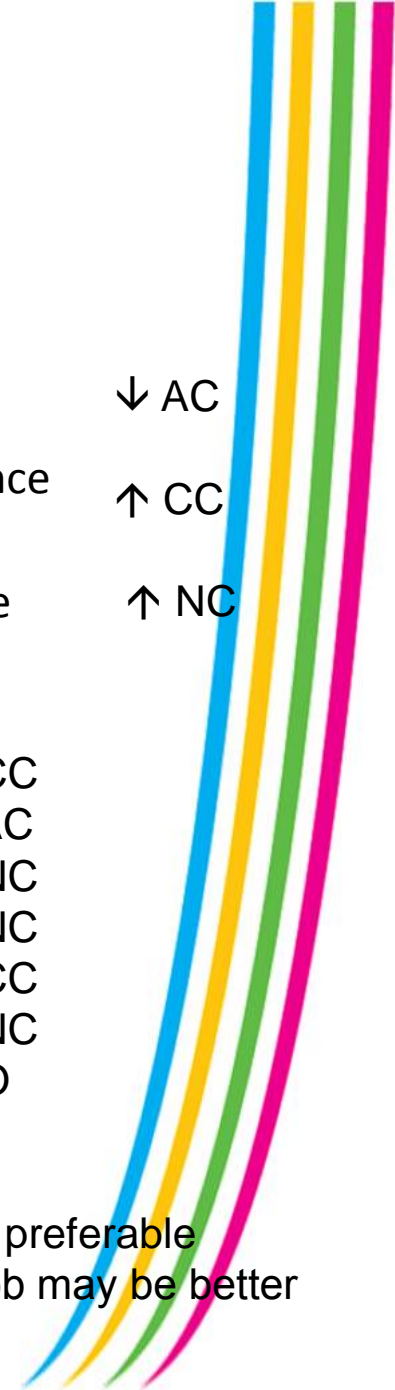
↓ AC
↑ CC
↑ NC

Afraid might happen if don't go
 Enjoy talking about education
 Can get the grades, should go
 Feel I ought to go
 Feel I do not have to go ®
 Good job = would not need to go ®
 I think I would fit in

Disagree	Agree	↑ CC
Agree	Unsure	↓ AC
Unsure	Agree	↑ NC
Agree	S. Agree	↑ NC
Disagree	S. Agree	↓ CC
Unsure	Agree	↓ NC
Agree	S. Agree	↑ O

Wants to go to Uni / HE
 More feeling they ought to go
 Think they will fit in

Now thinking alternatives are less preferable
 Don't feel they have to go and a job may be better
 Unsure about grades
 Unsure if they can afford it



Conclusion

This research demonstrates the positive impact of summer school in facilitating learners to consider and to **understand better** what is right for them individually and **what they value** for example **is education worth the debt**.

This research demonstrates within the sample that **summer school activity does what it is intended** to do, in **assisting decision** making amongst already aspiring learners.

Increased continuance commitment demonstrates **increased perception of the importance** of university in comparison to alternatives.

This is a tool that should be used at **individual level** perhaps in conjunction with the **Learner Progression Framework** or models of steps through progression.

This research **goes further than previous research** into the impact of summer schools as it **examines attitudes** in terms of commitment, **influenced by participation**, rather than focusing on **perceptions of summer school**.

Recommendations for further research

Follow up with interviews to contextualise data and obtain further explanation.

Conduct with other groups of learners.

Test / revise perception of statements through focus groups or cognitive interviews to ensure the most appropriate wording and understanding of measures used.

Consider commitment to current education then future aspirations.

Conduct a longitudinal study to test how commitment types develop through the learner journey and into the work context.



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