

Synopsis of a potential master's thesis project within the project "Understanding and supporting well-being among highschool students in Sweden: an intervention project"

### **Students' mentalization ability and authenticity**

Positive education is a way of teaching well-being psychology to students through various interventions designed to promote greater levels of positive emotionality and resilience; reduce depressive symptoms (Penn Resiliency Program, see Gillham et al., 2006; Brunwasser et al., 2009); increase mindfulness (see Meijklejohn et al., 2012), gratitude (Froh et al., 2008); promote understanding and use of character strengths (Proctor et al., 2011); and find intrinsic motivation in learning to develop a growth mindset (a mindset enabling an attitude for lifelong learning and development; e.g. Donohoe et al., 2012). The value of such interventions is that they combine psychoeducation with different practical exercises, providing both knowledge of the effects of emotions on youth's thoughts and behaviours, and hands-on tools to hone their skills in dealing with these emotions. These have shown promising results for wellbeing and further incorporation in schools (see Waters, 2011).

The aim of this bigger project is to understand and support students' well-being by both analysing their well-being profiles over time, and introducing the students to positive education interventions at school. The intervention takes the form of weekly classes with students in two Swedish high schools. The intervention aims to enhance students' levels of well-being and reduce their stress, anxiety and depressive symptoms. Furthermore, the intervention includes multiple self-reflection exercises. It is expected that the intervention can enhance the students' levels of both mentalization (ability to understand one's own and other people's thinking and emotions; Dimitrijevic et al., 2018), as well as authenticity (ability to understand and express the self more; Wood et al., 2008). The contents of the intervention are geared towards self-reflection and discovery of own values, strengths, goals and interests, all of which are expected to enhance students' reflection of who they are and what they think/feel and value (i.e. mentalization and authenticity).

These two constructs seem highly related to each other, however, so far there is a lack of research exploring the interrelationships between high mentalization ability and its potential link with authenticity and well-being in general. This master's thesis project could set to explore whether higher mentalization is related to higher authenticity and well-being among high school students in Sweden.

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