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Employee wellbeing in the higher education workplace : a role for emotion scholarship

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Abstract

This article has dual aims. First, it proposes an explicit focus on emotion as a means of enriching thinking about employee health and wellbeing in the higher education (HE) sector. Second, in order to bring conceptual clarity to a highly complex area, it presents and illustrates (using a fictional scenario) a framework for understanding emotion. The article begins with an overview of recent published research relevant to the HE workplace as an affective domain and argues that research with an explicit focus on emotion is a so far little exploited means of investigating aspects of working life in HE that have implications for health and professional practice. It then presents a conceptualisation that views emotion as a system within which individual and environmental factors interact in highly intricate ways in emotional experience (Lazarus in Emotion and adaptation. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1991, 1999). Viewed from this perspective ?emotions?, as opposed to less powerful ?affects? (such as attitudes, beliefs and opinions), are uniquely relevant to physical and mental health. The article concludes by considering implications arising from this perspective on emotion for researchers and other practitioners in HE with an interest in how the university workplace impacts on the wellbeing of

21.9.2026

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