

# ***Human Flourishing:*** **Philosophy, Public Policy & Education**

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- Philosophy deals with questions about the purpose of life, of well-being
- But , not many governments make public policy from philosophical positions about meaning and well-being

# Why not?

## Economics first

- "Money isn't everything. But for measuring national success, it has long been pretty much the only thing (other than, of course, sports). The specific metric that has prevailed since World War II is the dollar value of a country's economic output." *The Economics odds of Well-Being, Harford Business Review*

# Why not?

## Economics first

- "Happiness is more important than GDP...The idea of putting happiness at the heart of our economy is not new, but is not the focus of mainstream policy or culture in western economies. We have long been led to believe that GDP growth is ultimately the measure of a country's progress, creating jobs, investment and production of goods and services." *Guardian on the Legitimate Institute Report 'Well-being and Policy Report', 2014*

# Why not?

## Economics first

- "Poetry is a luxury we cannot afford." *Lee Kuan Yew, 1968*
- Are poverty and poetry mutually exclusive?

# Why not?

- Hard to define well-being, flourishing
  - Philosophy?
    - Hedonic
    - Eudaimonic
  - Psychology?
    - Positive psychology (Seligman)
    - Flow (Csikszentmihalyi)
    - Subjective well-being (Diener, Kahneman)
    - Mindfulness (Buddha)

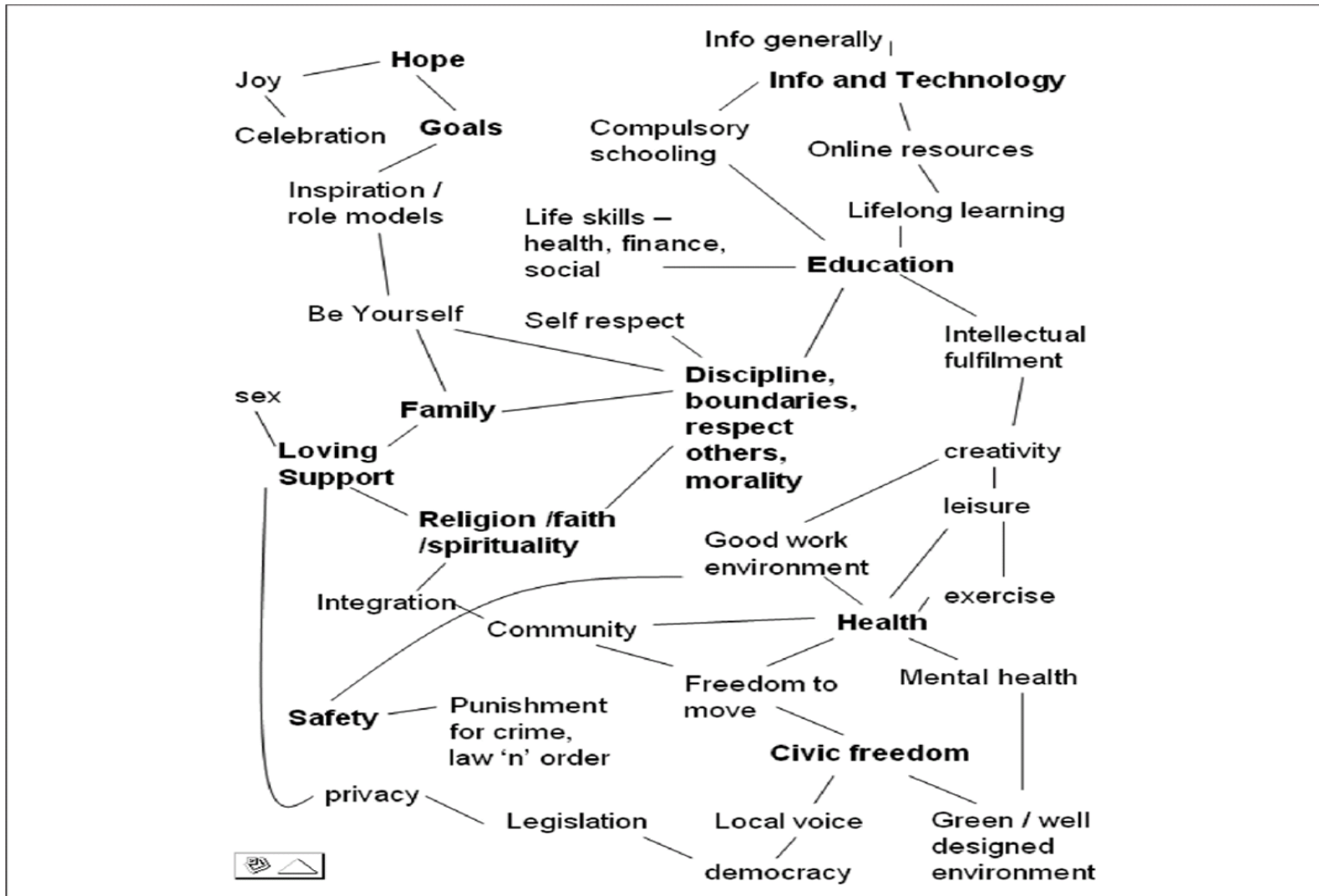
# Why not? Philosophy of well-being

Complex construct on optimal experience and functioning.

Two general perspectives:

1. Hedonic: **happiness**, i.e. pleasure attainment and pain avoidance (Outcomes) (*Hobbes, Bentham*)
2. Eudaimonic: **meaning and self-realization** i.e. degree of fully functioning (Processes) (*Aristotle, Buddha, Confucius, Bentham*)
3. Capability approach (Sen) : **Real freedom, capability for functionings** i.e. Beings and doings. HDI. (Choice) (*Sen, Nussbaum*)

**Box 13: Ipsos-MORI mapping of the elements of human flourishing**





Each of these four different theoretical models, conceptual operationalizations, and the body of science supporting them, is reviewed in greater detail below. They are depicted in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Four different conceptualisations of flourishing**

KEYES	HUPPERT & SO	DIENER et al.	SELIGMAN et al.
Positive relationships	Positive relationships	Positive relationships	Positive relationships
Positive affect (interested)	Engagement	Engagement	Engagement
Purpose in life	Meaning	Purpose and meaning	Meaning and purpose
Self-acceptance	Self-esteem	Self-acceptance and Self-esteem	–
Positive affect (happy)	Positive emotion	–	Positive emotion
–	Competence	Competence	Accomplishment/ Competence
–	Optimism	Optimism	–
Social contribution	–	Social contribution	–
Social integration	–	–	–
Social growth	–	–	–
Social acceptance	–	–	–
Social coherence	–	–	–
Environmental mastery	–	–	–
Personal growth	–	–	–
Autonomy	–	–	–
Life satisfaction	–	–	–
–	Emotional stability	–	–
–	Vitality	–	–
–	Resilience	–	–

# Why not?

- **Post-modernism**
  - Subjectivism, relativism
- **Liberalism**
  - Freedom to decide how to lead lives
  - If people are happy who are we to say not
  - Role not to be moralistic
- **Purpose of government**
  - Goods and services provider
  - What people want vs what people need

# Why not?

- Certain well-being aspects do not serve authoritarian governments well
  - Choice
  - Freedom
  - Autonomy

# Some change...

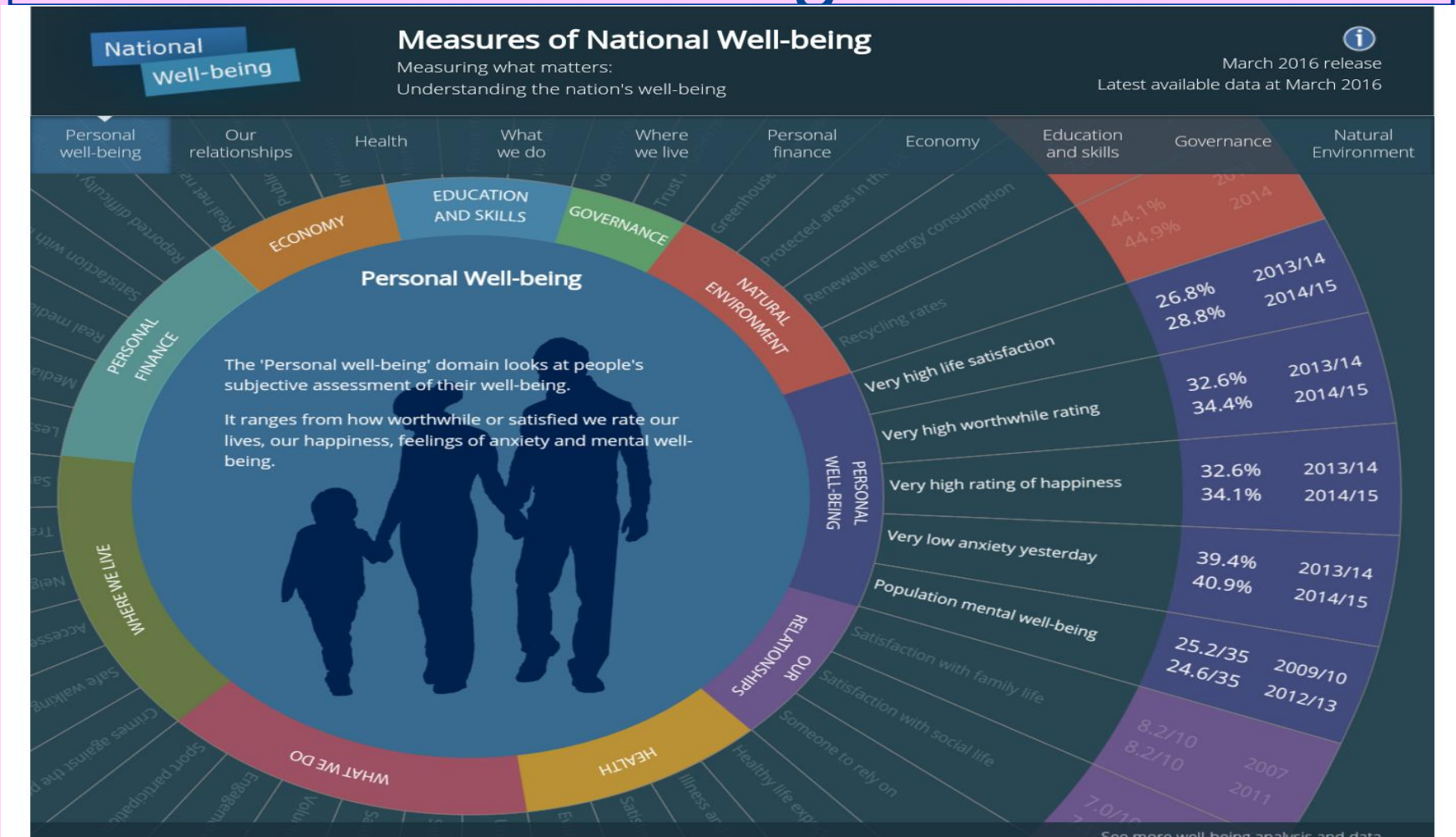
## Countries looking at well-being

- UK
  - Australia
  - Canada
  - US (social progress)
  - OECD
- Unfortunately numbers game, instrumentalism

# Mapping Australia's Progress

Dimension	Headline progress indicator
Health	Life expectancy at birth
Education and training	People aged 25-64 with a vocational or higher education qualification
Work	Unemployment rate
National Income	Real net disposable income per capita
Financial hardship	Average real equalised weekly disposable income of households in the second and third deciles of the income distribution
National wealth	Real national net worth per capita
Housing	No headline indicator (but a data based discussion of housing)
Productivity	Multifactor productivity
The natural landscape	Threatened birds and animals; annual area of land cleared; salinity, assets at risk in area affected by salinity; proportion of water management areas where use exceeded 70% of sustainable yield
The Human Environment	Fine particle concentrations, day health standards exceeded
Oceans and Estuaries	No headline indicator but a range of supplementary indicators are discussed
International Environmental Concerns	Net greenhouse gas emissions
Family, Community and Social Cohesion	No headline indicator but a range of supplementary indicators are discussed
Crime	Victims of personal and household crimes
Governance, Democracy	No headline indicator but a range of supplementary indicators are discussed

# UK Measures of National Well-being



# Countries looking at happiness

- Bhutan (Gross National Happiness)
- Finland
- Norway
- South korea
- Cities: *Seattle, Goa*

# International efforts

- World Happiness Report
  - United Nations Sustainable Development Solutions Network
- UN HDI
  - Capabilities approach inspired
- Gallup State of Global Well-being Report
- Happy Planet Index (HPI)
  - New Economics Foundation



# Gallup State of Global Well-being

- Purpose: Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals
- Social: Having supportive relationships and love in your life
- Financial: Managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security
- Community: Liking where you live, feeling safe and having pride in your community
- Physical: Having good health and enough energy to get things done daily

# LSE: Philosophy and Public Policy

- 1. What is well-being, how is it measured, and how should it be measured? 2. When, if ever, is paternalism justified? 3. What is the role of personal responsibility in determining people's claims on public resources? 4. What are the moral limits of markets? 5. When, if ever, is equality in the distribution of goods (such as health, income, or well-being) important? 6. How should we evaluate risks of harm and chances of benefit to people? 7. What are our rights to freedom of expression? 8. What are our rights against being harmed and to harm others in war? 9. Do we have a right to privacy? 10. What are our moral obligations to animals?

# But default also implies an underlying philosophy, even if unstated

- In policy, government has to decide what to do and what not to do, and this has to be guided by some underlying principle.
- Even "pragmatic" societies operated on some underlying principles
  - Eg, Singapore, Hong Kong

# Economic growth figures can be meaningless

- Equality and equity
- Other externalities
- Costs to the future

# What people think

- Given the choice between pursuing wealth or happiness, 81% believed directing policy towards promoting greater happiness should be the government's primary purpose (Easton, 2006).
- Economic measures , eg GDP, endorsed by just 30% of respondents compared to 79% endorsing 'life satisfaction' as a measure of national wellbeing (ONS UK, 2011).

# Happiness vs well-being vs flourishing

- Link between happiness and flourishing, well-being not properly explored, especially in the public policy realm.
- The U shape of life happiness?
- Well-being = mental health?
- Flourishing but unhappy?
  - Knowledge, creation, hard projects, self-cultivation

# Animals vs Socrates

- J S Mill : Not just the quantity of pleasures but quality that matters
- "It is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied. And if the pool, or the pig, is of a different opinion, it is only because they only know their own side of the question."  
(False consciousness)

# What now?

- Operationalising is hard, but...
- We need a back to philosophical basics in regard to public policy in general and education policy in particular.
- Governments should state clearly, explicitly how well-being and human flourishing are policy ends, and what they mean by well-being and flourishing.



# What now?

- Role of education
- Tyranny of PISA

- Within the narrower field of public education policy, the picture is pretty much similar. That is, few education systems in practice draw from philosophical questions about what education should be.

# East Asian Countries

- Development
- 'Good' education: PISA, TIMMS
- Poor well-being
- Even less flourishing

# Gallup State of Global Well-being

- Purpose: Liking what you do each day and being motivated to achieve your goals
- Social: Having supportive relationships and love in your life
- Financial: Managing your economic life to reduce stress and increase security
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# Gallup Global Well Being Index

Country	Overall ranking on Gallup Index	Thriving in more than three elements	Purpose	Social	Financial	Community	Physical
Panama	1	53.0	1	2	30	2	1
Costa Rica	2	47.6	2	3	50	10	2
Puerto Rico	3	45.8	3	1	37	8	4
Switzerland	4	39.4	21	42	3	5	27
Belize	5	38.9	8	9	73	3	3
Malaysia	41	24.6	51	35	34	32	32
Philippines	43	24.1	19	22	96	20	53
Thailand	50	22.4	39	71	21	76	59
Taiwan	59	19.8	69	58	13	79	116
India	70	17.1	79	95	92	65	38
Indonesia	73	16.7	93	57	43	63	101
Japan	92	13.5	87	127	11	86	135
Singapore	97	12.7	111	123	9	72	137
South Korea	117	9.4	96	112	53	113	138
Hong Kong	120	8.6	140	134	23	108	140
Tunisia	141	4	144	142	103	125	143
Togo	142	3.9	126	143	142	121	105b
Cameroon	143	3.1	136	137	129	133	141
Bhutan	144	3	143	104	75	145	145
Afghanistan	145	0	145	145	145	97	144

# A Singapore story

- "Happy consumer"

Thank you!

