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Personal wellbeing and curriculum planning: a critical comparative review of theory, policy and practice coherence

Abstract

There is a heightened interest nowadays in educating for personal wellbeing based on the belief that schools can be a civilizing force for good and help make young people's lives more fulfilling and meaningful. At the same time, there is a premium placed on high quality subject teaching and academic achievement and on countries doing well on tables of international comparison. The degrees to which these priorities can be coherently pursued are discussed in this critical paper. The paper begins with a theoretical overview of wellbeing values before reviewing the extent to which these values are recognizable in policy guidelines in Australia, England, New Zealand and Scotland. The paper then outlines how a version of wellbeing could plausibly connect with policy and planning aspirations to take forward improvements in subject teaching *and* personal wellbeing, and where a middle path focus could benefit students' wider achievements and teachers' sense of agency.

Keywords: Wellbeing, Policy, Curriculum, Pedagogy

Introduction

There is a heightened interest nowadays in educating for personal wellbeing on the basis that even when beset by uncertain economic times schools can be a civilizing force for good and helps make young people's lives more fulfilling and meaningful (Layard & Dunn, 2009). Wellbeing momentum is reflected in public policies whereby schools across much of the Anglophone world are a conduit for reviewing a plethora of societal concerns about students' mental, emotional social and physical progress (Matthews, Kilgour, Christian, Mori & Hill, 2015). Given the results from recent studies of children's wellbeing there is a need for such policies. The Children's Society (2015), for example, note that children in England have relatively low levels of subjective wellbeing e.g. life satisfaction was ranked (14th out of 15 countries); self-confidence (15th out of 15 countries); relationships with teachers (14th out of 15 countries); school experience (12th out of 15 countries) and feeling positive about the future (11th out of 15 countries). Indeed, it was mostly in areas indirect to education e.g., friends (6th out of 15 countries), freedom (8th out of 15 countries) and amounts of opportunities (8th out of 15 countries) where more average comparisons were evident. Given this type of evidence it is unsurprising that White (2011) considers that nurturing student dispositions and engaging with students' everyday experiences benefits schools and helps them achieve a broader range of societal goals.

At the same time, there is a premium placed on high quality subject teaching and on countries doing well on tables of international comparison. Succeeding on this basis provides reassurance that students' as future knowledgeable employees will be well-positioned to support the economy within highly competitive globalized markets. Thus, by no means everyone considers that wellbeing should feature prominently as a component of education. Ecclestone and Hayes (2009), for example, have concerns that an emphasis on attributes, skills, values and dispositions are muddying the margins between the educational and emotional responsibilities of schools and the home. Associated with this concern is unease about a downgrading in teachers' instrumental function i.e., of helping students to engage with ever higher levels of subject knowledge understanding. This misguidedness in curriculum thinking is in the view of Young (2014) brought about by considering the learner rather than the learner's entitlement to the disciplines of formal teaching as the starting point for planning. Paterson (2014) has similar concerns and is perplexed by the lack of subject-based specialism in Scottish education relative to the prominence afforded to students' motivation and even more problematically to students' enjoyment. This position reflects Ecclestone's (2013) concerns that the privileging of personal wellbeing can undermine the importance of subject

knowledge and alter the ways in which teachers interpret curriculum reforms and relate to students. In addition, Biesta (2013) is concerned that the personal emphasis with wellbeing can make it more difficult for students to focus on the underpinnings of democratic citizenship.

Given these contested positions, and in line with Dolan, Layard and Metcalfe's (2011) advice that a public policy led exploration of wellbeing should be theoretically rigourous and policy relevant, the paper proceeds with a conceptual overview of wellbeing values before reviewing the extent to which contrasting versions of wellbeing values are recognizable in policy guidelines in Australia, England, New Zealand and Scotland. The paper then outlines how a middle path version of wellbeing (one that coherently merges the intrinsic and the instrumental, the subjective with the objective) could plausibly connect with policy and planning aspirations to take forward improvements in subject teaching *and* personal wellbeing. This middle path route forward also considers the importance of teachers' agency and profiling students' wider school-based achievements.

Wellbeing theorizing
Wellbeing is a relatively new term in philosophical theorizing relative to historically-related terms such as welfare, utility and happiness. This can lead to wellbeing meaning different things to different people, and to education policies conceiving of wellbeing in different ways. Tiberius (2013) highlights five main wellbeing theories with wellbeing considered as either a subjective theory (i.e., based on things which are *intrinsically* good for us) such as *hedonism,* (Bradley, 2015), *desire fulfillment* (Griffin, 1986) or *life-satisfaction* (Sumner, 1996) or, as an objective theory (i.e., based on things which are *instrumentally* good for us) such as *human nature fulfillment theory* (Nussbaum, 2011) or *individually-driven nature fulfillment theory* (Haybron, 2008). For greater elaboration on these see Thorburn (2017a), but briefly, *hedonism* places a premium on pleasure and with fostering a sense of being pleased with the positive decisions made following experiences. Bradley (2015) considers that hedonism has many advantages as it appreciates how well someone's life is going at any particular moment or time (rather than over a whole life). Notwithstanding the benefits of students having some opportunity to exercise choice over subjects or activities which they find enjoyable and interesting, the requirement nowadays in most educational contexts for engagement with subject-based objectives means that hedonism theorizing is insufficient to meet the requirements of most curriculum arrangements. *Desire fulfillment theory* moves beyond hedonism to focus on identifying objects (targets) as desires. The challenge is to indicate how desires can provide an account of values and worthwhileness which recognizes that desires differ in terms of their strength and intensity. In effect, desire fulfillment theory can enable individual variability within an overarching theory e.g., some students might have only a passing interest in participating in some activities while others may find participation to have a more lasting influence. These effects introduce the notion of *effort* and *achievement,* and for the prospect of achieving desires which motivate and engage students (Bradley, 2015). The main downside of desire fulfillment theory is that people often make irrational or ill-advised judgements. The remedy for this difficulty is to make theorizing idealized by outlining how it is only certain informed desires which contribute to personal wellbeing (Griffin, 1986). Thus, a mix of subjective and objective elements can inform judgements and aid thinking provided the advantages of privileging certain desires is not overly constrained by the narrowness of what counts as an informed value (Bradley, 2015). For example, continuing to study some subjects in school might not match your idea of what makes life go well. However, it might match your idea of where you want your life to get to.

The challenge for *life-satisfaction theories* is similar to that of desire fulfilment theories i.e., to indicate how self-beliefs can move beyond satisfying individual needs and preferences. The main advocate of life-satisfaction theory, Sumner (1996), considers that authentic happiness provides the endorsement necessary for connecting life satisfaction with welfare values. Authenticity is achieved when a person's own values are central to their evaluation of wellbeing. This occurs through

merging experiential feelings with a cognitive review of how well life is going according to your standards. The main problem with life-satisfaction theories is that people might be constrained by lack of information or degrees of oppression. As such, the prospects for this theory are dependent on the degree of objective information people have when they make decisions. For example, students might be moderately engaged in some subjects, which they value to an extent. However, without autonomy (and the chance and opportunity to make full and informed choices) students' maybe unlikely to be *wholeheartedly* engaged in activities and subjects, and it is wholehearted engagement which leads to flourishing. A distinguishing feature of desire fulfillment and life-satisfaction theories therefore is that they tend to require idealizing (objective) elements, so that the more unreliable aspects of subjectivism are of limited influence.

The simplest type of objective theory is a list theory which enables measurements of wellbeing to be made. The problem with a list is that the criteria specified might not be important to people. To overcome this limitation, more specific forms of objectively influenced theories have been developed. *Human nature fulfillment theory* is based on the concept of function, and developments such as Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach is an attempt to describe necessary functional (outcome-based) attributes where comparing capabilities should make it possible to measure how well a person's life is fairing, and of how well a person's life is fairing relative to others. Robeyns (2005) notes that the defining characteristics of the capability approach are its broad interdisciplinary focus on wellbeing and the capacity the approach has to highlight the differences there are between the subjective and the objective i.e., between substantive freedoms (capabilities) and outcomes (achieved functionings). Nussbaum (2011, p. 156) advises that as far as young people's education is concerned that 'governments will be well advised to require functioning of children, not simply capability … (and that consequently) … we should tolerate less deference to individual - or parental - choice'. While some may concur with such reasoning e.g., in areas such as achieving functional levels of literacy and numeracy, it may be less so with regard to personal wellbeing, as not everyone is seeking or desiring the same normative ends. *Individually-driven nature fulfillment theory* is constructed with a view to reviewing the extent to which values match peoples' emotional needs (Haybron, 2008). This theory has similarities with life satisfaction theory, in that happiness must be autonomous in nature and not unduly constrained by lack of information. However, as Haybron (2008) argues authenticity needs to include *richness*; where richness is taken to mean fully engaging with the complexities of life. This type of theorizing might be considered as a form of *pluralism* where, for example, objective-led discussions on subject priorities merge with students reviewing the various subjective influences which motivate and sustain their interest.

Wellbeing policy: Australia, England, New Zealand and Scotland
The general intentions of policy guidelines and specifications benefits from existing comparative reviews of education policy making in Australia, England, New Zealand and Scotland, see for example, Sinnema and Aitken (2013), Priestley and Sinnema (2014). Sinnema (2016, p. 966) also notes, that the policy focus in England and Australia is based on a 'tightening of national control, prescription and regulation over curriculum, with expanding curriculum content and a more explicit emphasis on core knowledge', whereas in New Zealand and Scotland the focus is more on teachers using their professional autonomy to make planning and pedagogical decisions at school level in a way which benefits from the low level of prescribed at national level. Yet within these general descriptions there is need for further probing as policy processes are often shaped by global pressures and then mediated in contrasting ways at national and local level (Priestley, Laming & Humes, 2015).

In Australia, preparations for a new national curriculum resulted in a syllabus type reform (Priestley, Laming & Humes, 2015) within which concerns exist on how to effectively merge subject knowledge with cross-curricular priorities and a seven-fold generic capabilities approach for enhancing cross-curriculum learning and teaching. The closest of the seven capabilities to wellbeing

- personal and social capability - is organised into a minimum foundation of four interrelated and non-sequential elements: self-awareness; self-management; social awareness and social management (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority [ACARA], 2013). Under self-awareness students are encouraged to develop a well-grounded appreciation of their own emotional states, needs and perspectives and as part of self-management students are supported in their attempts to develop metacognitive skills and strategies to manage themselves in a range of situations in order to achieve their goals. Under social awareness, students are encouraged to recognize others feelings and knowing how and when to assist others within a rights respecting culture and under social management students are supported in their attempts to work effectively with others and to resolve conflict with positive outcomes.

ACARA (2013) notes the changes in nomenclature there have been within the domain of personal and social learning and draws upon a number of academic references to support the approach it has taken to enhancing personal and social capability. Thus, references to Gardner's (1983) work on multiple intelligences and Goleman's (1998; 2006) work of emotional and social intelligence are drawn upon to support personal and social capability skills in learning areas and across every stage of students' schooling. In this way, personal and social capability skills provide a foundation for learning that supports hope and optimism as well as strengthening academic learning (ACARA, 2013). Relative to earlier theorizing, the approach taken in Australia has elements of desire fulfillment and life-satisfaction in that there is a mix of subjective and objective influences across the self and social elements. These can potentially inform judgements and support thinking about the benefits of privileging certain desires and providing judgements which are not overly constrained by the narrowness of what counts as an informed value. For example, the organizing elements of personal and social capability under self-awareness describe the importance of identifying factors that influence emotional responses and of developing a realistic sense of personal qualities and achievements through reflective practice. Arguably, this is broadly coherent with social management intentions for managing successfully personal relationships in conjunction with participating in a range of social and communal activities and making effective decisions (ACARA, 2013).

The self and social awareness and management focus is also redolent of Nussbaum's (2011) notion of the good (capable) life being one where young people can reflect critically in order to participate in the political world and the world of living with others (functionings). This form of human nature fulfillment theorizing is unstated in the arrangements with teachers being expected instead to incorporate the general capabilities within largely subject-led teaching arrangements which accord with particular state and territory priorities (ACARA, 2015). In this context, policy makers are aware themselves of the need 'for more direction and provision of information about how the general capabilities can practically link to the learning areas and associated achievement standards' (ACARA, 2015, p. 43). Part of this review might involve considering how a psychologically-informed focus on capabilities e.g., personal attributes such as resilience, courage and determination and social dimensions such as group learning can dovetail with a metacognitive perspective on wellbeing which emphasizes more the importance of reflecting critically on happiness and personal decision-making. Furthermore, there may be a need for greater clarity about how a capabilities/functionings approach (with a focus on social awareness and social management) can articulate with a focus on personal value judgements (with a focus on self-awareness and self-management). It may also be possible that greater theory-policy coherence could be achieved by reviewing how the ten central capabilities of Nussbaum (2011) articulate with the 16 levels of progressive learning statements on self-awareness; self-management; social awareness and social management (ACARA, 2013). This according to Gale and Molla (2015) was the intention of the personal and social capabilities approach at the outset. However, while a change in governmental politics led to a stronger version of neo-liberalism being introduced, the telling point in terms of the ambitions of this paper is that the focus on arguing for a broader-based capability account of

enhancing social justice was overtaken by an emphasis on outcomes, performance and functionings. Thus, what became evident was a utility-orientated approach to social justice which could more obviously serve the economic needs of Australia relative to an approach which focused on more plural (self and social) benefits. This led to Gale and Molla (2015) considering that student' capabilities have become hollowed out due to the separation of education from wellbeing and agency.

In England, personal wellbeing is part of personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE) and a non-statutory component of current National Curriculum plans. By contrast, the study of 'Citizenship' is a compulsory part of the curriculum and centres on improving understanding of: Democracy and Justice; Rights and Responsibilities and Identities and Diversity (Department for Education, 2013). PSHE (2016) recommends that where appropriate teachers should make personal wellbeing links with statutory curriculum requirements and on this basis funding has been provided to the PSHE association (as the lead national body) to advise schools on how to design curriculum arrangements and improve the quality of learning and teaching. In their FAQ section, in answer to the question, 'How do I fit PSHE education into the curriculum?' the response is 'We recommend that PSHE education should be taught in discrete lessons, supported by other learning opportunities across the curriculum, including the use of enhancement days where possible. This is the position taken by Ofsted' (PSHE, 2016). The non-statutory nature of wellbeing coupled with advice promoting discrete lessons and enhancement days is more of parallel track approach relative to integrating wellbeing with subject learning and whole school ethos. Furthermore, Formby and Wolstenholme (2012) found that shorter term interventions such as thematic days proved ineffective with some teachers viewing wellbeing-related initiatives as more of an obstruction than a benefit to the academic life of the school and of little, if any help, in raising students' attainment. The relatively low curriculum prominence of wellbeing is perhaps to be expected, for as Gale and Molla (2015) highlight in an Australian context, the strength of neo-liberal influences on education policies (as prominent in England) can result in the more subjective merits of wellbeing being jettisoned in favour of more measurable goals. However, relative to the pattern of findings found in The Children's Society (2015) reporting, the policy position adopted raises questions about the adequacy of wellbeing coverage, especially given that it was only in areas which were modestly associated with schooling where young peoples' views were more positive and in line with other countries. It also raises the more tangential question over whether the greater curriculum focus on citizenship, democracy and justice and rights and responsibilities is coherent with the increasingly selective and specialized range of school types which are being championed (Ball, 2013).

In New Zealand, various curriculum revisions have led to a policy context marked by broad curriculum intentions (e.g. specification of key competencies and indicators rather than essential skills) which are designed to dovetail with an emphasis on enhancing teachers' autonomy and flexibility (Priestley & Sinnema, 2014). Between 2013 and 2015, the Educational Review Office published a comparatively large range of support documentation covering the values and vision which should underpin attempts to inform how curriculum are designed and monitored and the role of students voice in informing wellbeing decisions (New Zealand Government, 2015). However, few academic references advise how wellbeing might become a successful part of schooling with most references based on existing policy references. And, while policy definitions of wellbeing assume that young people should play an active role in their own learning and lifestyle there is allied to this a particular concern over mental health as a fifth of young people exhibit emotions or have had experiences that put their wellbeing at risk (New Zealand Government, 2016). In theoretical terms emphasising the active role students should have in determining their learning and lifestyle, indicates a form of richness which is reflective of aspects of an individually-driven nature fulfillment theory. However, in practice a wellbeing progress review in 68 secondary schools found support for wellbeing varied across schools with just over a quarter of schools being overwhelmed

by various issues and unable to adequately promote students wellbeing (New Zealand Government, 2015). To improve matters it was considered that the Ministry of Education should provide examples of approaches to students' wellbeing which are strongly aligned to the health and physical education learning area and which supports the development of the key competencies. The deeper engagement with particular learning areas (health and physical education) could be seen as a form of pluralism, whereby discussions on subject priorities can link to the particular influences which motivate and sustain students' interest and which may over time become part of their wider achievements. In this light, the New Zealand Government (2016) position could be considered relatively detailed in elaborating how wellbeing values can be promoted across the curriculum and as a feature of school leadership and ethos. That said the aligning of wellbeing with particular learning areas (as also evident in Australia and Scotland) is considered by Sinkinson and Burrows (2011) to run counter to a more obvious whole school approach with concerns existing about why sensitive issues such as diversity, discrimination, body shape and relationships are being left to particular subject teachers who might play it safe and stay within their pedagogical comfort zones. A further concern is the burdensome nature of assessment in the senior secondary school years, where Soutter, O'Steen and Gilmore (2012) found that as students progressed through schooling, there was increasing evidence of assessment-related subject tasks and as insufficient focus on students' wellbeing in students' qualifications records. Thus, Soutter et al., (2012) consider that a more multi-faceted view of academic success which encompasses wellbeing is needed. These pressures coincide with Sinnema's (2011) general evidence of teachers' enthusiasm for the curriculum aims becoming curtailed by plans for introducing national standards of assessment.

In Scotland, the policy context is broadly comparable to New Zealand as both countries emphasize the value of school subjects alongside a partial engagement with the therapeutic culture ambitions which are a concern of supra national bodies with an interest in equity, health, social justice and the emotional wellbeing of young people (Layard & Dunn, 2009). Thus, Scotland has a curriculum emphasis on building students capacities and unlike England 'Education for Citizenship' is only one of a number of generic themes of learning (e.g., others include creativity, enterprise, sustainable development) which are designed to permeate the curriculum. Personal wellbeing by contrast occupies a much more prominent curriculum role and is along with literacy and numeracy, one of three key responsibilities of all teachers, plus a subject specific responsibility for those teachers who have a specific health and wellbeing remit (Scottish Government, 2008). Policy implementation has tended to become adversely affected by the open-ended nature of what might count as viable learning experiences and by related outcomes concerns about how progress can be monitored. Thorburn (2017a) found a rather patchwork approach in action which was generally far less advanced than it was for literacy and numeracy. Furthermore, it was announced in 2016 that the Scottish Government is to introduce a form of national testing for literacy and numeracy as part of a diagnostic endeavour to raise national standards and reduce attainment inequalities. However, this initiative does not apply to health and wellbeing. This development tends to reaffirm the importance of subject teaching and that personal wellbeing is primarily a supportive enhancement to curriculum teaching rather than part of a more radical repositioning of educational aims. Recent policy advice reinforces this view through emphasizing that all teachers should be sensitive and responsive to the wellbeing of every student and create learning environments where students are listened to and actively involved in class discussions (Education Scotland, 2014). Methodologically, the intention is that greater holistic and interdisciplinary learning will play a key role in connecting wellbeing values with subject knowledge imperatives in order to make learning more meaningful for students. Recent policy advice documented through an impact report consisting of 17 key strengths and 18 aspects for development areas for improvement under the headings of: culture (supportive ethos and high quality relationships); systems (shared focus, improving outcomes) and practice (sense of teamwork and productive environments (Education Scotland, 2013). This more extended approach contrasts with the earlier streamlined policy approach and mirrors recent OECD (2015) advice of the need for reforms to focus on curriculum and related assessment and pedagogy concerns rather

than wider ranging societal reforms. Thus, the vital question at present is how can personal wellbeing become a more evident responsibility of all teachers at a time (when unlike England) comprehensive schooling remains pivotal to Scottish identity.

Australia, England, New Zealand and Scotland: a policy comparison
Relative to the countries reviewed, there is often a lack of coherence between conceptual-based discussions of wellbeing and the related educational policies being taken forward. The three major constituents of this mismatch are; the general policy context within which the curriculum planning of wellbeing is taking place; the lack of theory informing policy and the poor transfer from policy to curriculum planning. After saying something on the first two of these mismatch concerns, the paper focusses on the latter consideration i.e., how might personal wellbeing merge more closely with subject teaching as part of everyday schooling practices in a context where there is an enhanced focus on teachers' agency and students wider school-based achievements.

General policy considerations
With regard to the wellbeing policy context, there are various points of general agreement with the earlier theorizing of Sinnema (2016) and Priestley, Laming & Humes (2015). For example, Sinnema's (2016) view that there is a tightening of national control and regulation over curriculum in Australia is evident in the emerging focus on utility even though it is taking longer to provide information on how this version of general capabilities can link in practical terms to the learning areas and achievement standards (ACARA, 2015). This situation suggests a downturn in the curriculum importance of wellbeing, which may be related to the increase there is in neoliberalism-related policy making (Gale & Molla, 2015). Sinnema's (2016) view that in England there is a much more explicit emphasis on subject knowledge appears true, even though this adversely impacts on the circumstances of wellbeing, as wellbeing for the present is in the curious position of not being part of the formal (compulsory) curriculum but part of an endorsement for wider neoliberalism in education. A defining tenet of neoliberalism is choice and in England there is choice as to whether you include wellbeing in the curriculum, choice as to what version of wellbeing is taken forward and choice as to how it is taken forward. Whether these choice arrangements work as a policy approach given the findings of The Children's Society (2015) report is a much more open question.

In New Zealand and Scotland the wellbeing focus, as Sinnema (2016) indicated, is more on teachers using their professional autonomy to make planning and pedagogical decisions at school level in a manner which benefits from a relative lack of prescribed subject knowledge. However, as Priestley, Laming and Humes (2015) also note, the way policies are mediated at local level varies. For example, in Scotland, while the empowerment of teachers and the limited prominence given towards specific content knowledge proved popular with teachers (at least as an aspiration) the specification of 51 experience and outcome statements covering six areas of health and wellbeing has been widely criticized (Reform Scotland, 2013; Thorburn, 2017b). The criticism has often centered on problems associated with replicating the same outcome statements across various ages and stages of schooling, twinning mental with emotional wellbeing and thus separating it out for practical purposes from social and physical wellbeing. This rather cumbersome policy approach might be considered at odds with the approach to wellbeing in New Zealand where there is a much more explicit focus on mental health and the reasons why this a national priority in education. That said the concern in New Zealand is whether wellbeing as a contributor to mainstream education becomes a markedly different experience for those students identified as being particularly at risk. This position could end up in framing wellbeing as either a relative strength for most students or a deficit concern for a minority of students.

Theory informing policy considerations

Given that most philosophers with an interest in moral wellbeing and/or positive psychology rarely consider the detail of mainstream educational contexts in their theorizing it is not unexpected that their thinking often has limited connections with policy (Thorburn, 2017a). In addition, as Haybron and Tiberius (2015, p. 713) highlight, even if philosophers of education do spend time searching for the ideal wellbeing policy it may prove unrealistic in any event as wellbeing in practice can turn 'out to be whatever the person doing the talking believes to be the right account of well-being.' Despite these multiple challenges, it is considered in this paper that there is a merit in advocating that achieving some form of middle path coherence between personal values (intrinsic/subjective) and those which are set as targets (instrumental/objective) is beneficial for self and social (whole school) reasons. Associated with this aspiration, Haybron and Tiberius (2015) consider that given the widely accepted principles of respect for others, that wellbeing policy should promote the values which individuals consider to have a bearing on their wellbeing. Haybron & Tiberius, 2015, p. 714) consider this to be part of a pragmatic subjectivist approach to wellbeing which 'represents a workable approach given the diversity of values in modern democratic societies.'

Middle path possibilities: integrating personal wellbeing, subject teaching and students wider achievements

In sketching out how a middle path version of wellbeing could inform a workable approach in schools, the position adopted here reflects Sinkinson and Burrows (2011) belief that aligning wellbeing with particular learning areas runs counter to a more obvious whole school approach where the vast majority of teachers have an explicit responsible for wellbeing. This approach is favoured in spite of acknowledging that connecting wellbeing with everyday subject teaching raises questions over whether wellbeing can be suitably personal and vivid for students at a time when policy guidance often fails to provide teachers with the confidence to respond to students reporting of their wellbeing (Thorburn, 2017b). Therefore, proceeding with middle path pragmatic intentions comes with it a need to map out in further detail how a coherent mix of personal values and subject-related targets can plausibly connect with policy and planning aspirations to take forward improvements in subject teaching *and* personal wellbeing, and where there is also an enhanced focus on teachers' agency and students' wider school-based achievements. If successful, progress could overtake concerns that theory, policy and practice are operating in parallel spaces across Australia, England, New Zealand and Scotland for much of the present time. Accordingly, it is only in abandoned policy attempts in Australia thus far where there has been recognition that a wellbeing capability approach has both conceptual depth and plausible connections with practice (Gale & Molla, 2015).

In trying to make middle path type progress, Thorburn (2014) drew upon productive pedagogies literature (e.g. Hayes, Mills, Christie and Lingard, 2006) to inform how a holistic model of learning and teaching in Scotland could potentially shape how wellbeing became a clearer focus in lesson planning and a more evident part of teachers decision making. On this basis, students' cycles of experience and review were designed around integrated learning tasks that were informed by both subject knowledge and reflective values, and which linked with ongoing reviews of students' wider achievement and summative reviews of learning outcomes. Thorburn (2014) argued that properly developed experiences such as these could suitably challenge students as they would need both cognitive resources to construct coherent meanings and to reflect critically, plus an emotional engagement with learning tasks. This view was considered to be largely consistent with MacAllister, Macleod and Pirrie's (2013, p. 157) pedagogical thinking, whereby 'the broadly liberal variety of education as initiation into valuable knowledge that is advanced by Peters, Hirst and Aristotle' is best enacted when students are 'supported to voluntarily engage with and think about valuable knowledge so as to develop their understanding of it' (p. 157).

In developing this view further, there may be possibilities in reconstructing how aspects of John Dewey's ideas, most notably Dewey's interest in applying the principles of continuity and interaction, could foster personal growth and enhance subject knowledge learning gains. For Dewey, continuity of experience ensures that learning is a rich and fluid process where initial experiences are refined by on-going cycles of reflection and verification, and where interaction merges the aims and content of the experience (objective conditions) with internal conditions (each students' unique mental map of the world) in order for learning to become more meaningful (Dewey, 1938). Thorburn and Allison (2017) argue that implicit in the theorizing of Dewey is an encouragement for teachers to take measured pedagogical risks and for students to have some measure of active co-constructor responsibility for the pace and direction of their learning. These can be set up through relatively open learning environments where students hesitations and initial thoughts can over time inform the establishment of more rounded conceptual understandings which are both accurate (objective) plus relevant to their lives (i.e., having an internal value). To aid this process, teachers in addition to recognizing that learning takes time, should use strategic questions to facilitative discussion and help students to critically engage with their experiences, recognize available choices and discern viable ways forward. If effective these approaches can appreciate the importance of students' agency in learning, support the development of cognitive skills and affective qualities and contribute to students' being better placed to recognize the breadth of their wider school-based achievements.

That said the extent to which these types of approaches are being taken forward in practice in Scottish schools remains open to considerable doubt. For as the OECD (2015, p. 10) note, following the patient implementation of new curriculum guidelines, the current period is a 'watershed moment' and the right time for a bolder and more dynamic approach to teaching and learning. However, Thorburn & Dey (2017) found through a small scale study, which collected data via an online survey and student and teacher interviews in four secondary schools in Scotland, that teachers' level of engagement with their new wellbeing roles and responsibilities was variable at best. Inevitably, this adversely impacted on students' grasp of how their personal wellbeing contributed towards their broader achievements. This mismatch between policy-related supported for being bolder and a possible lack of boldness in schools suggests that more detailed research interventions which can uncover school-based attempts to take forward improvements in subject teaching and personal wellbeing, and where such a focus could benefit students' wider achievements and teachers' sense of agency are much needed.

In addition, the OECD (2015) calls for strengthened networks and collaborations among schools, and in and across local authorities as the best means for communicating new pedagogical ideas. And, while this might be a good idea and possible at a local level, at a national level the online updating of case study evidence of impact-based gains in wellbeing continues to be few in number and modest in terms of the detail of how the examples provided have become an embedded feature of everyday schooling (Education Scotland, 2018). Only nine brief one page examples are currently provided in the broad areas of partnership, professional learning, learners' voice, leadership and self-evaluation. Thus, the extent to which middle path progress is being made in schools in the manner anticipated by Education Scotland (2014) and outlined as being conceptually possible by Thorburn (2014, 2018) is of concern.

In addition, to these planning and pedagogical matters, the pursuit of these various types of ambitions can become unstuck if students make poor decisions which are out with a certain framework of stable values e.g., if students' thinking leads to decision-making that fails to show some form of measured sensitivity and awareness towards others. This is quite possible to expect, if students are asked to make sense of experiences which have little in common with their previous learning experiences. Therefore, teachers under the pedagogical plans being scoped out need to appreciate that their remit includes guiding students towards discovering informed and stable values

which are borne out of experience and a degree of reflection, deliberation and review. This advice follows standard Aristotelian plans for teaching where there is a threefold emphasis on the requirement for practice, the need for teachers to exemplify the virtues and extended opportunities for exercising reflection and deliberation (Arthur & Carr, 2013). To help in making coherent progress, it would be useful if teachers have an accurate predictive understanding of the type of choices their students are most likely to make. Anticipating these types of experiential learning considerations can avoid the problems of teaching becoming unduly didactic with learning experiences becoming insufficiently informed and driven forward by students situated learning experiences. It might also offset MacAllister's (2012) concern that by overly focusing on teachers' reflective abilities, education can lose track of the importance of teachers being able to make sound in-the-moment professional judgements.

Conclusion

While it is generally positive that public policies are trying to engage with wellbeing agendas what emerges from a review of developments in England, Australia, New Zealand and Scotland are variable degrees of policy coherence and clarity. This is partly due to degrees of confusion about how contrasting constructions of wellbeing can support the policy and political context in these countries. This situation places school and teachers in the difficult position of having to manage a plethora of everyday responsibilities at the same time as forward planning on how to engage and respond to new policy imperatives on personal wellbeing. In terms of taking forward subject teaching *and* personal wellbeing agendas, where there is an enhanced focus on teachers' agency and students' wider school-based achievements, reconstructing Deweyan notions of continuity and interaction in a modern guise represents it is argued a viable strategy for improving students growth and for empowering teachers to make greater use of their professional autonomy. Progress on this basis might help teachers to gain the theoretical foothold which is often necessary for planning middle-way pragmatic-informed holistic learning experiences.

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