development of the well-being of the country (culture, education, healthcare)

Managing the Well-being of a Country

By Yves Van Nuland and Grace L. Duffy

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Abstract

Transparency and feedback from citizens and other stakeholders are critical for establishing a country culture of well-being. The Society & Active Citizenship model contains processes for public service organizations to solicit feedback from their community at the local, state, regional, and country levels. Key performance indicators direct assessment and improvement efforts based on data, including direct feedback from those using the products or services of the organization soliciting the feedback. Three components of well-being, autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fundamentally linked to well-being. Areas for effective measurement are suggested.

Introduction

The Society & Active Citizenship Model (SAC-Model) (Van Nuland and Duffy, 2021) was introduced in a 2021 paper published in the ASQ *Quality Management Forum*. This model answers two main questions: How do we know that a country is well managed? and How do we know that the results of the country are excellent and sustainable?

The focus of the SAC-Model is management of the whole public sector[1]. The public sector consists of various types of organizations. We call these AOPS: All Organizations of the Public Sector.

Figure 1: Schematic presentation of the SAC-Model

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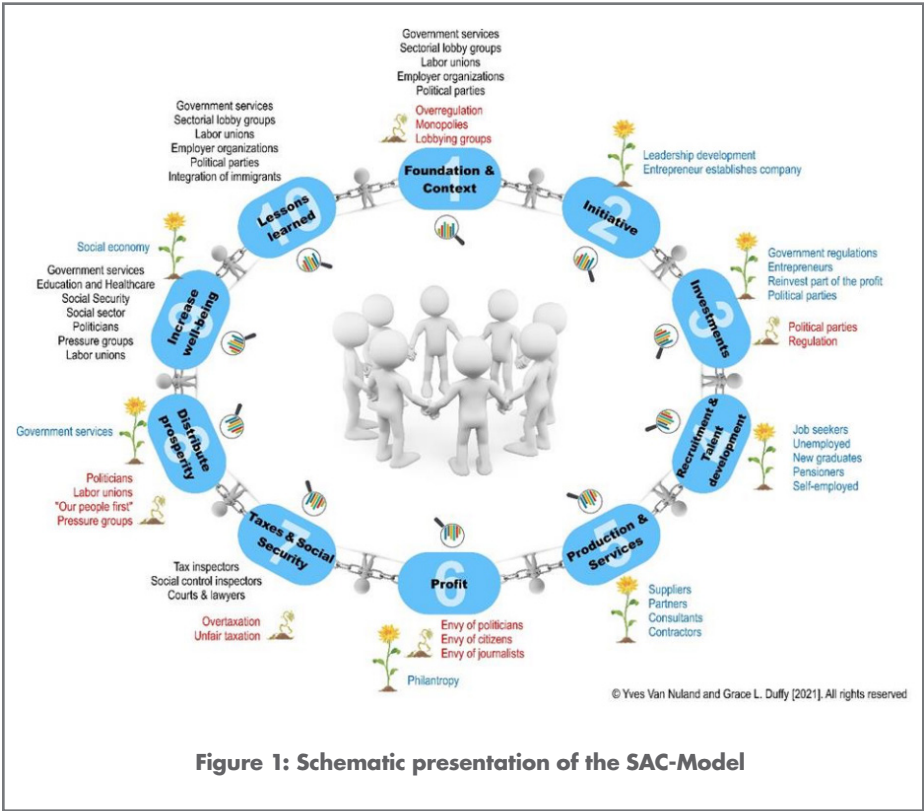
The intent of link 1 (Figure 1) is for the government agencies to create the conditions under which private business can develop and prosper within the country, community, etc. through which private entrepreneurship becomes possible. This first link is managed by the AOPS. It includes subjects such as infrastructure maintenance, inspection, and control activities. Entrepreneurs take initiative (link 2), set up companies, make investments (link 3), recruit staff (link 4), manage operations (link 5), and make a profit (link 6). They contribute to the development of the country by paying taxes and employing citizens, who also pay taxes. The tax money is managed by the government (link 7). This further develops the foundation for living, working, and leisure (link 8).

Many AOPSs are responsible for the development of the well-being of the country (culture, education, healthcare). Each AOPS, when it employs a self-assessment method such as the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award (MBNQA) or the Excellence Model EFQM, analyzes areas such as human resources management, gender equity, resilience, sustainability, safety, public health, ecological issues, integration of certain groups within society, and stakeholder satisfaction (link 9). Organizations from the

well-being sector (culture, education, healthcare) are now able to improve the well-being of the population in a systematic and structured way.

Links 1, 7, 8, and 9 are managed largely by the AOPS. Links 2, 3, 4, 5, and 6 are executed mainly by privately owned companies. Link 10 applies to all. The **non-prescriptive nature of the SAC-Model** is one of its strengths, in contrast with standards such as ISO 9001 and ISO 14001, which have a mandatory character. However, within the SAC-Model the responsible managers are accountable and must behave responsibly.

How do we know how effectively the well-being of a country is managed?[2] This question is studied in link number 9 of the SAC-Model. It is important to note that we are looking at the overall results of country well-being. This is pursued by the systematic management of many individual AOPS organizations based on key performance indicators (KPIs) that are meaningful and representative. Above all, they must be holistically coherent.

We first define well-being, and then describe a list of possible indicators, and, finally, discuss how measurements are performed.

Definition of Well-Being

Well-being is defined as the presence of positive emotions (satisfaction, happiness) and the absence of negative ones (sadness, anxiety) (*Livepositively, 2024*) It is necessary to consider three components to understand and measure the well-being of individuals:

1.1 Satisfaction

This refers to the cognitive or *evaluative dimension* of well-being, a judgment, and a global evaluation of one's life or of any other field or situation such as work, or personal relationships. Satisfaction is often linked to the achievement of objectives and the feeling of success.

1.2 Pleasure

This is related to the *emotional dimension* of well-being. It is about the quality of a person's experience regarding the emotions she or he experiences, and it reflects the way a person feels about his or her life or a situation rather than how she or he remembers it.

1.3 Self-realization

Corresponds to the *psychological dimension* of well-being. This gathers all the attributes that contribute to the fulfillment and psychological development of individuals, such as autonomy or the feeling of having an influence on one's life or on any other field or situation.

Pillars of Well-Being

According to the **self-determination theory** (SDT) (Ryan, 2000), three basic psychological needs—**autonomy, competence, and relatedness**—are fundamentally linked to well-being. This has been confirmed in a study in 27 European Union countries (Martela, 2022).

We can divide the key indicators into two classes: *well-being* (happiness, life satisfaction, and meaning in life) and indicators of *ill-being* (symptoms of depression). This is what we call in Table 1 positive influence and negative influence.

Money influences well-being only to the extent it is associated with fulfillment of basic sustenance and psychological needs (Martela, 2022). The primary way through which income contributes to well-being is through allowing individuals to satisfy their physical and psychological needs. Lack of socio-economic resources can constrain one's autonomy, allow fewer opportunities to exhibit competence, and inhibit social relationships.

Table 1 lists some possible factors that have an impact on the well-being of the population. It is impossible to list all possible parameters here. Think about the large number of indicators that the public sector in general and hospitals in particular use.

This table illustrates how well-being is dependent on a large number of factors. Moreover, well-being is also dependent on the management of a huge number of KPIs, which are monitored

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Table 1: A non-exhaustive list of possible factors which influence the well-being of people

FACTOR	POSITIVE INFLUENCE, WELL-BEING	NEGATIVE INFLUENCE, ILL-BEING
Social	Volunteer work Higher education Freedom of speech (free press, …) Participation at associations and volunteer work	Crime Family breakdown Accidents (automobile, bicycle, work, and leisure
Economic	Sufficient income Basic needs Housing Satisfaction with actual job Household net wealth (value of assets and liabilities) Entrepreneurial spirit and creation of new organizations (companies, non-governmental organizations, associations, …)	Low income Income inequality (Gini coefficient[3]) Underemployment High interest on loans
Environmental	Housing conditions (clean, well-insulated, well heated, no humidity problems) Neighborhood of living: short distance to woods and nature	Housing conditions (humidity, badly insulation, electricity installation, which is not correct, lead in drinking water, …) Homeless people Domestic threats take many forms, from parasites, dust, … Pollution (water, air, noise)
Educational	Education +18 year Able to speak the language of the country Keep learning new things (Number of days of post-school training per adult) Continuously learning	Percent of children not finishing primary school Literacy (percent of adults who can't read and write)
Cultural	Number of visitors to museum, gallery, … Participation at theatre, concerts, opera, events, … Number new and original pieces of art (music, literature, painting, drawings, sculpture, movies, …) created Reading books and visit library	
Nutritional	Healthy food (fruit, vegetables, bread) Healthy diet: sufficient calories consumed per person per day	Diet (consumption of sugar, alcohol, and fat) Too many calories consumed per person per day

Physical	Regular physical exercise	Sedentary lifestyle
	Sports	Passive behavior
	Sufficient sleep and rest	Not enough rest
Emotional	Feeling good and positive	Feeling bad, anxious
	Experiencing positive emotions such as love, happiness, and satisfaction (Martela, 2022) (Rosly and Rashid)	
Psychological	Optimistic	Pessimistic
	Mental health	Stress
	Direction and purpose (have goals to look forward to)	Never set goals
		Loneliness
	Set goals and develop life plans	Suicide
	Meaning (be part of something bigger)	Suspicious (not sharing information and data with others)
	Embrace change	
	Share data and information	
Relations	Lifestyle	Divorces
	Quality of life	Bullying (work, school, university, associations, clubs)
	Family ties	
	Bonding with community	
	Closeness to nature	
	Donations (time and/or money)	
Health	Life expectancy	Dementia (Alzheimer, Parkinsons …)
	Vaccination	Depression
	Number of doctors per 100,000 people	Burnout
	Number of hospital beds per 100,000 people	Number of children who die under the age of two years
	Monitoring chronic deceases such a cardio-vascular disease, diabetes, mental disorder, depression, …	Number of people with TBC, AIDS, diabetes, hypertension, allergies, immune deficiency, … per 100,000 people
	Healthy	
	BMI (between 20 and 25)	Number of days that adults are sick per 100 adults per month
	Recovery from cancer with a life expectancy higher than five years	Obesity and BMI too high (BMI>25)
		Chronic pain
		Disability due to accidents (by car, work accidents, home accidents, …)

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Drugs	Correct use of antibiotics	Over consumption of antibiotics
	Correct use of antibiotics in cattle breeding	Over consumption of sleeping pills
		Over consumption of antibiotics in cattle breeding
		Abuse of heroin, opium, cocaine, morphine, etc., fentanyl, …
		Number of cigarettes per day per resident
Working condition	Satisfied with job	Unemployment
	Harmonious work-life balance	Not satisfied with job
	Satisfaction in your work	Underemployment
Regulation	Good governance	Lots of bureaucracy
	Transparency (at all levels)	Frequent changes in regulations
	Stable regulation	Unclear regulations
	Clear and unambiguous rules	

by the leaders of many AOPS. Don't forget that every AOPS monitors well-being indicators for all stakeholders outside of the AOPS; this means the indicators that fulfill the needs of all stakeholders in the country. Only the sum of well-chosen KPIs from all AOPS will lead to excellent country well-being results.

There are many exceptionally good databases available listing possible factors of well-being to monitor. Three reputed databases we recommend are WHO, OECD, and Gallup.

Measurement

Some indicators in Table 1 are easily available or easy to quantify. However, some are more difficult to transform into a KPI. We suggest that the reader consult the authors' detailed paper on the management of KPIs (Van Nuland and Duffy, 2021). You always start by asking, "What do I want to achieve and is it necessary for the bigger picture?" It is absolutely necessary that you describe a detailed situation of the planned objective. You also describe the conditions and the target you want to achieve. In the next step you discuss this description with people who

will contribute to the achievement of these goals. If you do it well, you'll develop a good process for measuring, monitoring, and improving your KPI. There is one major pitfall to avoid: use of "weasel" or ambiguous words. These are words which are vaguely defined. Examples: efficient, performance, quality, universal, satisfaction. KPIs must be quantitative, measurable, and lead to specific improvement actions.

Good to Know

Most countries measure their economic success through a systematic and detailed measurement of gross domestic product (GDP). This is indeed link 8: Distribute Prosperity. Link 9, by contrast, measures the well-being of its residents. The country Bhutan is offered as an example where the Global National Happiness Index (GNH) as a measure of country development is used instead of the more common GDP. The latter gives a full picture of the welfare of a country. The SAC-Model is the first method which facilitates a full picture of monthly evolution of the country's well-being.

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We remind the reader that the SAC-Model is a non-prescriptive model. It is the responsibility of every AOPS leader to establish and monitor those well-being factors that they consider worthwhile.

The huge number of indicators need to be aligned. This is done by the owners of the KPIs of each AOPS. The leader doesn't only show the results of his KPI but also explains how the KPI is aligned with the KPIs of other AOPS. The better this alignment; the higher well-being will be in the country.

We speak here of the management of KPIs, not of statistics. We have a KPI when the parameter is frequently measured (e.g., monthly), compared with a target, a decision is taken and the results are interpreted, discussed, and a new action plan is established. Statistics on the contrary is a static finding. In that case you take a picture of a situation at a certain moment. Nevertheless, KPIs and statistics should be used side by side. Statistics will evolve by a yearly update of the monitored data.

We only get excellent and sustainable results for the country if all ten links are managed well. This means that the links 8 (welfare) and 9 (well-being) are complementary.

Excellence models such as MBNQA, EFQM, CAF (MBNA, 2024) (EFQM, 2024) and others can give results on well-being, but these are directly related to the well-being of its own stakeholders, mainly collaborators of the organization itself. With the SAC-Model we look at the results of well-being of the stakeholders outside of the AOPS, i.e., all stakeholders, parties, residents, and organizations in a country.

Conclusion

When all leaders of all AOPS of a country put the SAC-Model in practice, you will have results of all aspects of well-being. Moreover, the results will be excellent and sustainable.

Footnotes

1. There are two categories addressed. One is the general government, agencies that report directly to politicians. Examples include governmental entities such as ministries, agencies, and departments, and regional and local organizations such as counties, cities, fire departments, and police stations. The second category includes public service organizations, such as public schools and universities, not-for-profit organizations, public-private partnerships, and government contractors (such as defense and social service suppliers). The latter category consists of organizations that depend on taxpayer funding for at least 50% of their budget through direct payments or grants. When we speak of the public sector in this article, we are referring to both categories. We call these the AOPS, All Organizations of the Public Sector.

2. When we mention "country," you need to read this as country, state or region depending on the scope.

3. Gini is a measure of statistical dispersion intended to represent the income inequality or the wealth inequality within a nation or a social group. The Gini coefficient measures the inequality among values of a frequency distribution, such as the levels of income. A Gini coefficient of 0 reflects perfect equality, where all income or wealth values are the same, while a Gini coefficient of 1 (or 100%) reflects maximal inequality among values. For example, if everyone has the same income, the Gini coefficient will be 0. In contrast, if for a large number of people only one person has all the income or consumption and all others have none, the Gini coefficient will be 1.

4. Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total monetary or market value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country's borders in a specific time period.

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