



HM Prison &
Probation Service



Learning
Together

Keeping connected: introducing ThinkLets

Learning Together builds educational communities that bring together people who live, study and work in universities and criminal justice organisations. Together, we want to use the power of education to improve lives, institutions and communities.

Covid-19 is a major challenge to our health and wellbeing. It means that we cannot physically come together as a community to learn with and from each other. But we can still keep learning and supporting each other to stay hopeful, positive and engaged.

Members of the Learning Together Network have created ThinkLets to help us all keep connected. Each ThinkLet contains resources that will help us to think about new ideas and develop new skills together, even from afar.

Each week, for the next eight weeks, two ThinkLets will be shared across our national community. We hope you enjoy them and find them helpful.

**Keep well. Keep hopeful. Keep connected.
And keep Learning Together.**

Please note:

The following resource was created with love and care by a member of the Learning Together Network. We sincerely hope that the creator's work will be respected by distributors, readers and users, and will not be subject to plagiarism or other forms of academic misconduct. Thank you for your cooperation.

ThinkLet #12

Shopping for Social Policy Principles

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11 May 2020

ThinkLet #12 draws upon the discipline of social policy to ask you to consider what should be the principles that underpin the welfare state. It is designed to encourage you to think about the distribution of resources within society, or more simply put, who should get what and why? The aim is to get you to think about how policy makers and Government's make decisions about the allocation of resources and whether that process is as straightforward as some might believe.

If you turn on the television or read a newspaper, you will unavoidably be reading about issues of Social Policy. There will be a number of stories focusing on health, crime, housing, employment and social security (the benefits system), all of which are concerns of Social Policy.



Such stories as those depicted above, demonstrate that humans are at the heart of the controversies portrayed, which is why social policy, even if people do not realise it, is often the subject of so many everyday conversations that we all have (Hudson et al, 2015). So what is it then? Social policy is the name given to the use of policy measures to promote the welfare of citizens and social well-being. Social policy, according to Alcock (2016) has dual meaning as it is used to refer to the actions taken by politicians and policymakers to introduce or amend provisions aimed at promoting individual welfare and social well-being. It is also the name given to the study of these policy actions and their outcomes. Social Policy is something that affects all of us in our daily lives. It is not just something that affects us here in the UK but is an international phenomenon as most countries across the world have developed measures to promote the welfare of their citizens. Often, countries are compared in terms of how well they are doing in relation to various social policy markers; they can act as an indicator of the success or failure of Government policies.

Within the UK, social policy has a long history, which can be traced back as far as 1601 when the first Poor Laws were introduced during the reign of Elizabeth I. Recent policy developments, however, have their roots in debates which occurred in the early twentieth century, and the reforms which followed these. The election of Clement Attlee after World War Two is considered to be one of the most significant points in the history of public policy development in the UK. He set out with a manifesto commitment to deliver a range of public policies to provide for the welfare of citizens and to create what we now know as the 'welfare state'.

This had been somewhat pre-empted by the 1942 Beveridge report which recommended to the Government a full and comprehensive social security reform. Beveridge wrote about what he called the '*Five Giant Social Evils*' that had undermined British society before the war: ignorance, disease, idleness, squalor and want. Beveridge argued that it was in the interest of all British citizens to remove these 'evils' from society and the state had the duty to do this.

Beveridge's Five Giants	Meaning	Modern area of policy
Want	The need for adequate income for all	Social Security
Disease	The need for access to healthcare for all	Health
Ignorance	The need for access to educational opportunity	Education
Squalor	The need for adequate housing	Housing
Idleness	The need for gainful employment	Employment

So, what do these mean in terms of policy? In the years following (1945 and 1951), comprehensive state provision to combat each of Beveridge's evils was introduced:

- Free education up to the age of 15 (later 16), to combat ignorance;
- A national health service (NHS) free at the point of use, to combat disease;
- State commitment to securing full employment, to combat idleness;
- Public housing for all citizens to rent, to combat squalor;
- National insurance benefits for all in need, to combat want. (taken from Alcock, 2016).

Discussion Point One

Do you agree with Beveridge's five giants?

Are there any giants missing?

What concepts do you think should underpin them? For example, equality, fairness, justice....



Whilst the post-WWII Labour Government started these reforms to create state services for citizens (which included an expansion of state responsibility and state expenditure), the Conservative Government elected in the 1950s continued the welfare reforms. There was cross-party consensus that such reforms were vitally important; both major political parties believed it was the state's responsibility to improve welfare.

So all-successive Governments have embarked on welfare reforms that have changed and shaped all of the areas that correspond with Beveridge's five giants. We have clear policies and practices around, education, employment, health, housing and social security within England. It is important to note that some areas of social policy within the UK are devolved, this means that Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland can have different policies and practices in place in relation to the five listed areas. For example, healthcare in Scotland

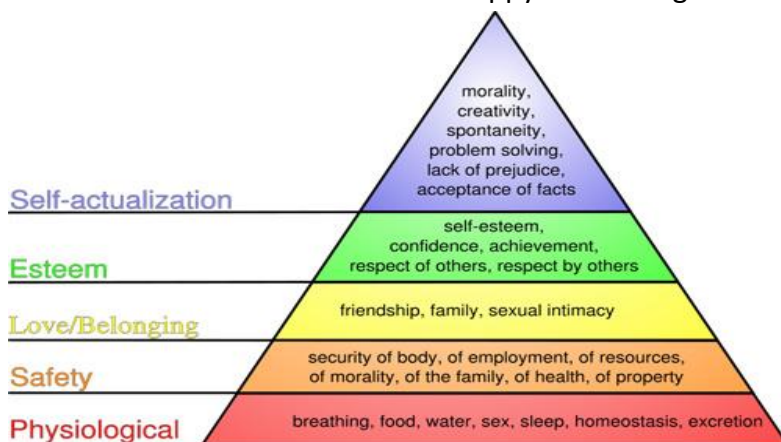
is devolved, which is why, for instance Nicola Sturgeon (Scottish First Minister) can make decisions such as the recommendation that all Scottish people wear face masks when out in public due to the Covid-19 pandemic which differs from the advice given to people in England.

Discussion Point Two

1. *What policies can you think of that are relevant to you or your family's current circumstances?*
2. *Have they changed over time? Were they different in your parents or grandparents' generation?*
3. *Has the change been for the better or the worse, in your opinion?*

All issues around the five areas of social policy, areas that form the welfare state as we now know it; form the core of most political debates both nationally and internationally. Social policies speak directly to the major concerns of our everyday lives: they shape our working lives, school lives and home lives and influence our living standards and living conditions (Hudson et al, 2015). They also address the big questions in society of who gets what, why they get it and how should they get it. These are questions, which often underpin many of the

issues we read about in newspapers and watch on television news. Underpinning these questions are two key concepts, 'need' and 'rights'. How it is determined who needs what, when, why and whether it is a 'need' or a 'right' are fundamental questions when considering social problems. Given that social problems, such as unemployment, poor quality housing, school exclusion rates, are caused by some social conditions and arrangements, an understanding of what people need and what rights they have to those needs are vitally important if society is to provide welfare and social well-being for its citizens. What then do we need as individuals in order to be well and happy? According to Maslow (1943), there is a basic hierarchy of needs:



Discussion Point Three:

1. What do you think of the hierarchy?
2. Do you agree or disagree with the order of the hierarchy?
3. This was written in 1943, does still apply in 2020?

It is widely believed that humans have a number of basic 'needs' that they need to survive, food, water, sleep, clothing, warmth and shelter. Esping-Andersen (1990) has argued that how societies respond to core social needs is a balancing act between the responsibilities faced by the state, the market, the community, families and individuals. Differing social rights and responsibilities have a clear impact on the distribution of resources in societies meaning that not everyone gets what they need or have the right too all of the time. In essence someone always misses out, as the scales (so to speak), are never quite balanced. So, who makes these decisions and more importantly how and why do they make these decisions? The Government, of course, are responsible for making decisions that are meant to improve our lives and social well-being. Yet often, making those decisions is difficult, as trying to achieve the balance between needs and rights for all parties involved (the state, the market, the community, families etc) is sometimes impossible.

This ThinkLet comes with an additional scenario-based exercise, designed to get you to consider how you, if you were in a position of authority, would choose to spend a budget of £22k between four deserving people. These are fictional scenarios, but the task is designed to get you thinking as to what concepts should underpin social policy decision making. Should it be fairness, equality, justice, rights, needs? How do you make a choice which in some circumstances will dramatically alter the course of someone's life? How and why should such decisions be made?

Making decisions on who gets what is not easy, nor is applying principles consistently possible when those who are applying them are human too, perhaps the only way to apply them consistently is to let a robot do it! This is because we all have biases, conscious and unconscious that makes it difficult for us to apply principles reliably. Williams (1989) has argued that Beveridge did not notice two other giants on the road to social progress, sexism and racism. If the characters presented above were different genders or ethnicities would, your outcome be the same? The easy answer is yes, the outcome would be the same, but if we explored unconscious biases further, then truly the outcome might be different. How does that impact on the principles you applied? These are difficult questions, but questions nevertheless that must be explored and answered if we are to truly have a fair and equal society where citizen well-being is at the forefront.

*Thank you for your engagement – I hope you have enjoyed this ThinkLet. Enjoy the rest in the series.
Stay safe and well,
With all my best wishes,
Rachel.*

(Thank you also to colleagues for allowing me to adapt some of their teaching material).

