The role of the Capability approach in measuring ‘good work’

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presentation

• identifies gap in CA clear framework for conceptualization of work and WB missing

• identifies requirements for a conceptual framework
  1. decide on ‘space of interest’
  2. specify normative framework to identify important functionings
  3. job characteristics: intrinsically and instrumentally relevant
  4. role of the capability set (broad vs narrow)
  5. operationalization of cap set and conversion factors

Very interesting and relevant topic!
1. Capability applications and conceptualization

What to expect from a conceptualization?

Objective and context of any capability application are critical!

1. monitor JQ among all residents of a country
2. measure ‘employment deprivation’ within an MPI
3. measure WB of children working in ‘worst forms of child labor’
4. ...

A particular capability applications may

- ignore specific complications for their empirical irrelevance
- benefit from some decisions clearly following from context

The (high-level) conceptualization of the work and well-being nexus

- should encompass any such exercise
- would leave the capability approach under-specified.
  - dimensions and concept of advantage remain to be selected
2. ‘Space of interest’

candidates:

1. well-being of an individual
2. jobs (‘quality of work on offer in UK’, “measuring ‘good work’”)
3. ...

Comments

• do we really have to decide?
• ‘unit of identification’?
• implications of the concept of advantage (eg achievements vs shortfall)
• choice may have various implications, eg
  ▶ deprivation or achievement through secondary jobs may be ignored
  ▶ capture phenomenon of multiple jobs?
  ▶ how far can the goodness of a job be assessed independent of the individual?
  ▶ conversely, an approach aiming at the WB of an individual has to account for these complications, too.
3. Capability set and work

“unemployment as a reduced choice set of labour activities”

- describe and analyze unemployment, but this is not the only aspect where the capability set matters.

1. say all jobs sb. can do (i) come with substantial deprivation in their health and (ii) substantial achievements in self-respect; the functioning vector comprising both high level of self-respect and good health is not in the capability set. - each dimension matters for capability set

2. deprivation of capability set may even matter if individual achieves high functioning outcomes in most or all dimensions considered relevant (“healthy slave”)
### 4. Characteristic providing activity vs dimension of WB

- Considering work conceptually as a characteristic-providing activity is well-compatible with a dimension of ‘work’ or ‘employment’ in measurement exercises (e.g., poverty or JQ).

#### Example: Global MPI (Source: OPHI)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3 Dimensions of Poverty</th>
<th>10 Indicators</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health (1/3)</td>
<td>Nutrition (1/6)</td>
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<td>Child mortality (1/6)</td>
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<td>Education (1/3)</td>
<td>Years of schooling (1/6)</td>
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<td>School attendance (1/6)</td>
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<td>Living Standards (1/3)</td>
<td>Cooking fuel (1/18)</td>
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<td>Sanitation (1/18)</td>
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<td>Housing (1/18)</td>
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<td>Assets (1/18)</td>
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- So why this ‘detour’ of work as characteristic-providing activity?
5. Indicators and deprivation

1. Identify critical shortfall in functioning (e.g., occupational disease)
   - direct measurement of deprivation
   - assumption: un-deprived not in capability set

2. Bad JC (e.g., high exposure to specific chemicals or heat)
   - indirect deprivation measurement (JC-based)
   - assumption or evidence: JC usually results in deprivation of one or more functionings

3. Absence of good JC (e.g., significant scope for decision making)
   - assumption or evidence: given level translates into sufficiently high functioning outcome (e.g., self-respect)

Complications:

- Second jobs, voluntary work
- Individual specific conversion factors