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The Salzburg Statement on Realizing Human Potential through Better Use of Assessment and Data in Education

A CALL TO ACTION

Rising investment in education around the world increases expectations that national systems will prepare more learners for higher levels of education, employment and careers, and that assessments will generate better data on system performance, benefits of public investment, and ways to achieve success in educating each learner.

However, despite much excellent practice, assessments too often reinforce assumptions and expectations about learners' capabilities rather than seeking to identify their full potential. Assessments and data often struggle to capture the essence and value of cultural differences critical to each community and country's identity. When based on narrow concepts of achievement and performance, they rely too heavily on simplistic tasks, disempower learners and teachers, and contribute little to improving pedagogy and professional development. Most current approaches reinforce education systems where gaps are widening and goals are narrowing.

We, the participants at Salzburg Global's session on *Untapped Talent: Can better testing and data accelerate creativity in learning and societies?* (December 12 to 17, 2015), urge all key stakeholders in the integrated education system to join together to help to address the following challenge:

How can we accelerate demand for improved assessment and use of data to progress toward more equitable and personalized education systems that value a wide range of goals and benefit all learners and society?

Goals and Principles for Action

Assessments and tests are used to inform and shape educational policy at local, national and global levels. To support the success of diverse populations, their goal should be to represent a broad spectrum of behaviors and potential, promote interest in learning, and contribute to improving learner outcomes and the effectiveness of education systems.

Due to resource constraints and competing priorities, today's assessments usually capture only a partial picture of human potential. They sample a limited range of academic performance under conventional standardized conditions.

New approaches are essential to measure the breadth of human capabilities and potential, and to communicate this more effectively to the public. We need to focus on the variety of skills and knowledge that lead to success in contemporary educational and occupational environments, and on improving the outcomes of learners and their education systems. This may require an expansion of current measures in order to meet learning and workforce needs for the 21st century.

Advances in transparent high-quality assessment and data can help build the evidence base for broader measurement of human potential.

Data can empower teachers, students and learners

We need more diverse indicators of creativity as well as knowledge and skills of local concern. This means that educational assessments and big data need to produce sufficient information to:

- Challenge assumptions and expectations;
- Have additional metrics for achievement and performance that go beyond current approaches to measuring math, science, language and literacy to assess a broader spectrum of human potential;
- Inform and support development of new pedagogies;
- Act as gap-closing pedagogical tools.

Best design practices for assessment and testing

We need to engage a more diverse representation of the population, and ensure that assessments:

- Enable all learners to show what they know, understand and can contribute to society;
- Accelerate learning and success for children and learners of all ages;
- Include teachers and invite parents and the wider community to contribute to the assessment design process;
- Do no harm and minimize bias;
- Are representative of the subgroups of populations, both within and across countries.

Increased investment targets to meet these challenging goal include:

- Teachers' professional status; professional development that empowers teachers to develop, administer and analyze assessment data, and to learn and apply the "science of learning" principles.
- The development of assessments designed for learning (formative and summative), improvement, and non-competitive and competitive options: these should include a variety of performance types which offer learners flexibility, and are community-relevant and publicly available;
- Assessments and data that enable fuller analyses of the various groups being assessed and the environments in which learning happens.

Recommendations

We call on all key stakeholders in the integrated education system – policymakers, educators, assessment providers and information technologists – to act now on the following recommendations:

POLICY INVESTMENT

- *Recognize* the powerful opportunities in assessment and testing to drive positive learning outcomes;
- *Invest* in assessments and testing that – in addition to traditional academic, social and other skills that are valuable in education and work – include skills valued by stakeholders that can drive reforms and better engage them within the education curriculum;
- *Provide* complementary funding in five areas:
 1. National standard setting to frame testing;
 2. Controlled communication of results to stakeholders;
 3. Human and technological infrastructure to handle data collection, analysis, and dissemination;
 4. Training to help teachers and curriculum designers refine schooling based on these data; and
 5. Independent review and research on assessments;
- *Connect* data tightly to practice and policies; *fill* gaps through collaboration between policymakers and researchers; and *increase* the number of data specialists at city/school district level to catalyze local action.

The Salzburg Statement of shared principles and recommendations is to be accompanied by a comprehensive report on the conversations and topics addressed at the Salzburg Global Seminar session *Untapped Talent: Can better testing and data accelerate creativity in learning and societies?*

METHODS

- *Use* best research practices to design assessments that measure key indicators of human potential, beyond easy-to-measure skills;
- *Conduct* more research on conditions and constructs that can lead to creativity in classrooms and lifelong learning, and factor multiple measures and dimensions of student learning into student assessment;
- *Assess* children in both the language spoken at home and the language of instruction, where possible; if not, *interpret* results with caution as low scores may reflect the child's language knowledge rather than conceptual difficulty with the questions being asked;
- *Identify* and *gather* global best practices on pilot testing and on careful, considerate and refined data management and analysis.

COMMUNICATION

- *Tailor* the dissemination of results with careful attention to recipients and the intended use of these data for various stakeholders (families, students, teachers, policymakers); *provide* avenues to incorporate stakeholders' goals for the use of data (e.g. rating schools on academic achievement, safety, criterion versus ranking data) into assessment design;
- *Formulate* ethical guidelines on communication and dissemination of data and testing results to ensure these do no harm (e.g. communicating relative weaknesses or strengths rather than absolute sum-scores which may feed into competitive comparisons or ranking);
- *Make* assessment results actionable by linking them to instructional strategies and professional teacher development to address areas of need.

We, the Fellows of Salzburg Global Seminar, commit to accelerate educational transformation for tomorrow's world by working together to advance these goals in our countries and to share good practices. We will initiate, foster and sustain cross-sector collaborations, and become ambassadors of this Statement.

The views expressed in this Statement are those of session participants individually and should not be taken to represent those of any organizations to which they are affiliated.

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About Salzburg Global Seminar

The mission of Salzburg Global Seminar is to challenge current and future leaders to solve issues of global concern. To do this we design, facilitate and host international strategic convening and multi-year programs to tackle systems challenges critical for the next generation.

Originally founded in 1947 to encourage the revival of intellectual dialogue in post-war Europe, we are now a game-changing catalyst for global engagement on critical issues in education, health, environment, economics, governance, peace-building and more. From the start, Salzburg Global Seminar has broken down barriers separating people and ideas. We challenge countries at all stages of development and institutions across all sectors to rethink their relationships and identify shared interests and goals.

Today, our program framework has three cross-cutting clusters and addresses the underlying questions that hold keys to human progress: **Imagination, Sustainability and Justice.**

Our exclusive setting at Schloss Leopoldskron enables our participants to detach from their working lives, immerse themselves in the issues at hand and form new networks and connections. Participants come together on equal terms, regardless of age, affiliation, region or sector.

We maintain this energy and engagement through the Salzburg Global Fellowship, which connects our Fellows across the world. It provides a vibrant hub to crowd-source new ideas, exchange best practice, and nurture emerging leaders through mentoring and support.

FOR MORE *info.*

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