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# Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

## Join in online!

If you're interested in writing either an op-ed style article for our website or the session report, or a personal reflection blog post while you're here this week, please let Salzburg Global Editor, Louise Hallman know or email your submission directly to [lhallman@salzburgglobal.org](mailto:lhallman@salzburgglobal.org).

If you do intend to write for your own organization either whilst you're here or after the session, please make sure to observe the **Chatham House Rule** (information on which is in your Welcome Pack). If you're in any doubt, do not hesitate to contact Louise.

We'll be updating our website with summaries from the panels and interviews with our Fellows, all of which you can find on the session page: [www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/566](http://www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/566)

You can also join in the conversation on Twitter with the hashtag #SGSedu and see all your fellow Fellows and their organizations on Twitter via the list [www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-566](https://www.twitter.com/salzburgglobal/lists/SGS-566)

We're updating both our Facebook page [www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://www.facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal) and our Flickr stream [www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://www.flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal) with photos from the session during this week and also after the session. (If you require non-watermarked images for your own publication, please let Louise know.)

We will also be posting photos to Instagram [www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal](http://www.instagram.com/SalzburgGlobal), and we encourage you to do so also, using the hashtag #SGSedu.



@toniacasarin: Beautiful way to start the day! #SGSedu #running



Richard Roberts, Tatiana Filgueiras and Meesook Kim

## Measuring social & emotional skills

**If “what is measured is treasured” is true, then how should we measure social and emotional (SEL) skills?**

The “Big Five” personality traits (openness to experience, conscientiousness, extroversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism) are often used as a framework for SEL assessments, with labels changed depending on for whom the tests are being conducted, e.g. “agreeableness” can be re-framed as “cooperativeness” in a workplace test. Another panelist labeled them as “self-management, relationship with others, agreeableness, emotional resilience and openness.” These different terms for similar traits can cause confusion. “We suffer from a ‘jingle jangle’ fallacy,” remarked on panelist, however, standardization of terminology remains unlikely given the differing priorities of the different stakeholders.

Many tools for assessing SEL skills, such as personality inventories, rely on self-reporting, asking the person tested to rate themselves and their skills. However this can lead to concerns of “fakeability,” especially if the tests become more high-stakes. The higher the stakes, the more likely the test-taker will alter their answers to fit what they perceive to be the “correct” answer

desired by the test-givers.

Different assessment designs, such as “forced choice” assessments (asking the test-taker which of several traits is most or least like them) can lead to a more precise measurement and more comparable data.

Combining this self-reporting data with results from other tests, such as ratings completed by teachers and parents, can lead to even more precise measurements.

Testing children in isolation, however, can reduce the opportunity to evaluate the “social” side of SEL; combining teachers’ observations can provide further precision than ratings alone.

Data from ratings and observations can then be combined further with other datasets, enabling insights to be drawn on how students’ performance in SEL assessments correlates to their academic performance or potential for criminal behavior, for instance.

Successful, insightful and actionable measurements require buy-in from multiple stakeholders, from students and teachers to parents and policymakers. However, these different stakeholders buy-in at different speeds, and efforts to accept and adopt SEL – and the measurement thereof – needs to accommodate this.



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## Practical proposals

If we are to scale-up the implementation of social and emotional learning programs, what practical tools do we need?

Following inputs from the expert-led panels and table discussions on Day 3 of *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills*, Fellows made the following proposals:

- Create a SEL “micro-credential” for teachers;
- Make use of online interactive experiences such as Second Life to offer more SEL opportunities in schools with fewer resources;
- Establish a global community of learning and practice dedicated to SEL;
- Develop performance tasks for primary and early years’ SEL skills development;
- Create “good parent” badges and guides for parents to help them nurture their children’s SEL development in the home/outside of school;
- Start SEL in early years education to increased the benefits in later years;
- Better communicate the value of SEL programs to policymakers, teachers, and the global community.

1. “Now we all have an equal sense of embarrassment” – Graham Robb

2. Koji Miyamoto

3. Have an “a-ha!” moment? Share it on a post-it note!

4. Helen Cowie, Hye Won Lee, Dominic Register and Baldev Singh

5. Julie Andrews or Richard Roberts?!

6. Coming in early to work on the newsletter has its advantages: seeing Tuesday’s sunrise!



# Suicide and sinking tragedy show why social and emotional skills are so important for students

Korean students and experts explain why SEL education is gaining greater importance

Chris Hamill-Stewart

South Korea has the highest suicide rate in the OECD, and the second highest globally. The importance of image in Korea, media coverage of celebrity suicides, and poor mental health care are among the reasons cited as reasons why so many Koreans choose to take their own lives. These factors play a role, but many also cite the education system, and the competitive culture surrounding it, as another critical factor.

The theory holds weight; in Korea, the youth suicide rate is abnormally high. Suicide is the biggest killer of Korean teenagers, those in their twenties, and those in their thirties.

The Korean education system is highly competitive; there is a huge emphasis on performing well in school and going to good universities. Korean high school students average sixteen hours a day of school-related activities, in school, or in *hagwons* – after-school programs for additional education. Many researchers believe this complete devotion to education undoubtedly contributes to the high rate of suicide.

The influence education has on wellbeing has been an important issue at the Salzburg Global session *Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills*. Participants have looked in-depth at how education systems can be improved by better developing students' Social and Emotional Learning (SEL). Salzburg Global spoke with Korean participants and staff about the effects that their education system has on students, and to look at how SEL might be able to improve this.



Heejin Park

Bina Jeon, a student in Korea and Yoojin Hong, a graduate, can attest to the need to utilize and teach more SEL skills. Both now interns with Salzburg Global Seminar, they found high school very stressful and competitive, and neither was happy. “When I had problems or felt stressed, the school didn’t provide me support – I found my support at home or with friends,” says Jeon. Hong’s experience was worse – she found that the competitive system affected her friendships, leaving her isolated from her friends if she or they achieved a higher grade. She “grew apart from her best friend from the moment she got a significantly higher grade than her.” It is not difficult to see how a culture of education like this may, in extreme cases, lead to children making rash and irreversible decisions.

Eun-su Cho, a philosophy professor in the top Korean university, Seoul National University, attended the session not to further her own academic research but to “find ways to improve her undergraduate and graduate students’ lives.” She says many of her brilliant students, with the top grades, are very quiet – they’re reserved and they don’t open up. The core of this is that they have “very little confidence.” This is not the attitude she wants her students to have.

Cho wants students to “have ideas about the future, society and their fellow citizens.” She argues that facilitating more SEL education would give students a chance to show who they are and to understand themselves better, which would build their confidence, and ultimately create better students and future leaders.

Heejin Park, a research fellow focusing on character education at the Korean Educational Development Institute, believes that things are changing in Korea, and they are starting to see the benefits of SEL skills. Park cites the 2014 MV *Sewol* tragedy as an important revelation for Koreans. The incident saw nearly 300 high school students drown when their ferry sank on a school trip and it made many in Korea realize that they may not be teaching students to think critically. Park asks if lives could



TOP: Yoojin Hong

BOTTOM: Eun-su Cho

have been saved had the students been taught to “think more autonomously.” She believes that the tragedy brought about public support for new legislation calling for more social and emotional learning, making sure that teachers are more engaged with their students and that they go further in teaching critical thinking and life skills.

Cho, Jeon and Hong all paint a dismal picture for the lives of students in the Korea, but it is worth considering the facts. In their latest PISA results, the OECD has just ranked Korea as the seventh best country in the world for both math and reading. Their education in cognitive subjects is exceptional, but the hard truth of Park’s point remains: sometimes it is not enough to just teach students to excel at math and literacy. SEL development is increasingly being recognized as important for students and into adulthood.

Korean education is opening up to the positive effects of SEL, but with such deeply ingrained ideas, culture, and norms surrounding the education system, it remains to be seen how far implementation and teaching of SEL will go.



## Hot Topic: “Should SEL be measured and assessed? If so, how?”

### #FacesOfLeadership

Yeji Park

“‘What is measured is treasured.’ That’s a very fine saying. It is treasured by policymakers and key stakeholders, and you have to assume that it has to be measured. It’s possible to measure using a combination of approaches: self-report, forced choice, and situational judgment test. If you use these three and triangulate across them, then you will be able to get rid of all the problems that would occur when you only use one of these approaches.”

**Richard D. Roberts**

*Vice President and Chief Scientist, Professional Examination Service’s Center for Innovative Assessments, Australia*

“The purpose of assessment needs to be clearly defined first. If it is simply to evaluate social and emotional skills of students, I don’t think it’s very meaningful. If we try to bring out educational effects through transforming evaluation methods, it could impede the original goal of furthering SEL development as students tend to focus on achieving a better score in the new evaluation system. We could learn much more if we discuss how we can develop more efficient ways to improve social and emotional learning through the assessment process.”

**Chanpil Jung**

*Secretary General and Founder, Future Class Network, Republic of Korea*

“To find more practical, relevant and simple ways of measurement – that is part of the reason why I came to this seminar. For our project in Bangladesh, we try to encompass both qualitative and quantitative measurement. Along with qualitative research methods such as class observation, focus group discussion, and in-depth interview, we use Ages & Stages Questionnaires that have been specially adapted for the Bangladeshi context. Though the method might differ from countries, I think we still need a global standard for the assessment.”

**Sakila Yesmin**

*Research Associate, BRAC Institute of Educational Development, Bangladesh*

“I think social and emotional learning should be measured to make sure that students are not only learning traditional competencies, such as math or literacy, but that they are educated more broadly to become a productive member of society and good citizens. I’m not sure if we should measure them in the high-stake assessments like other areas, as they are different, but we should definitely monitor if some specific programs are having an impact on their mission of developing these competencies.”

**Elana Arias Ortiz**

*Education Senior Associate, Inter-American Development Bank, Costa Rica*

“I was recently invited to the graduation ceremony at a school and gave remarks to students graduating at the top of the class. In my speech I said, ‘In this country, most of the people are using their education to do corruption, so please use your education to fight that corruption.’ Because you need to be educated even to figure out how the educated people are doing the corruption. Emotional and social skills are important in correcting whatever wrong is taking place in society. Only when educated people are sensitive toward their fellow human beings, and consider their responsibilities toward society almost as important as their commitment to their family and themselves, can real change take place. The education should be such that it brings the different levels of self, family, society and nature into harmony with each other. That is the kind of education we need.”

**Sandeep Pandey**

*Vice-President, Socialist Party, India*

Sandeep Pandey, vice-president of the Socialist Party of India, explains why social and emotional skills are important, especially in the Indian context.

With many interests in education, Pandey has been experimenting “non-competitive” method of evaluation that mainly focuses on each student’s learning process.

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