



Optimizing Talent - Closing Education and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide: Higher Education and Lifelong Learning



Saturday, October 6, 2012

SALZBURG DIARIES

Banquet & breakfast

Please join us tonight for a reception in the Venetian Room at 18:15 followed by a Concert in the Great Hall beginning at 19:00. After the Concert we will have our farewell Banquet in the Marble Hall starting at 20:00.

Please do not forget to check your boxes at reception if you depart by shuttle. Breakfast is served tomorrow between 07:00 and 10:00. Please let our colleagues from reception know in advance if you would like an early breakfast on the day of your departure.



Catherine Millett from ETS with Zena Richards from TTP at Wits Uni

You have reached your destination Navigating the route to optimizing talent

By: Gerben van Lent

These days when you start on a journey by car, often you use your navigator. First you ensure it is updated with the latest information, then you input the destination and you start to drive. Sometimes however you get into situations where you clearly get the wrong directions e.g. one-way traffic, or you are pointed in a direction that you are convinced is wrong or while you are definitely driving on a road the voice says something like “you have left the road, please try to locate the nearest road.”

Friday provided another round of input and exchange with four plenary contributions and many smaller (group) interactions each acting as ‘voices giving directions’ on the journey to Optimizing Talent: Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide and in the discussions ‘situations’ as hinted at above were encountered and addressed.

So this last time I will list a sample of these directions as indicators of the road we are travelling:

Some general systemic directions

Post school education is not just higher education, but there are all sorts of other forms that all of us should be supporting and develop links with so that more people can have some form of further training.

Let’s avoid a system of stratification that benefits the elite institutions but leave out most other institutes.

We should have a total new approach to the ‘age’ of which you attend of higher education. We should shift to students from every age. Leave the notion of ‘students are young’. You are never too old to learn. We need more flexible courses. You should be able to start full time, half time, quarter time over 3-5 years. Moving off campus, online. Open the system to many forms of learning. Consider to revolutionize recruitment of students: We should always be open to students that come from lower social backgrounds, weaker schools and to consider allowing them in with lower grades. We should reduce the gap between the best and the worst universities to stop growing disparity. If you allow a long tail of low quality universities than you sustain inequalities.

Greater emphasis on teaching right across our systems. Especially in universities. Professors need to teach also undergraduates. If we don’t do that many young people will struggle and fail; good teaching is key. So also value added systems for higher education. So you can also take in weaker students.

Support of social mobility is also a responsibility of employers. Employers should support all universities and provide e.g. trainee opportunities, apprenticeship places etc. with

universities opening up to employers.

The Korean journey provided insight in a system that is strongly driven by Confucius traditions shaped in the history and culture of Korea and blended with western academic and economic principles. Social mobility issues in this setting include reinforcement of equality at the entry level of higher education and intensification of student support programs to improve the performance.

The research of **access to Higher Education in the post-Soviet States** that was presented provided a sociological analysis along three parameters massification, privatization of costs and inequality. Suggestions for new directions were given including:

Search for a new conceptual framework to look at higher education to replace the concept of higher education as a market/quasi-market and human capital theory (which finds more counter-arguments in recent economic research);

Change public and policy discourse on the basis of this new framework; *cont’d p2*

Do further interdisciplinary research and data collection and consider for transitional societies – to look for social consensus about the fair access to higher education and its funding.

The development and implementation of integrated academic and social support activities to help students adjust and cope with

life as a university student is a key element in the improvement of higher education progression rates in South Africa. The Targeting Talent Programme (TTP), located at the University of the Witwatersrand, which was presented aims at the improvement of graduate outputs by improving performance patterns. Some strategies on the basis of the project to date and related research to address some of the challenges experienced in this South African context were presented: increasing chances of success and retention in higher education through the improvement of teaching and learning approaches, adopting a more flexible curriculum design, the promotion of African languages in higher education to reflect multilingual South Africa, consideration of the shifting identities of learners from disadvantaged contexts as they transition within the post-apartheid context, increase student engagement that facilitates their academic success, and increasing resource allocation to university student support programs.

The journey for the Optimizing Talent series of seminars started two years ago when three broad objectives were formulated:

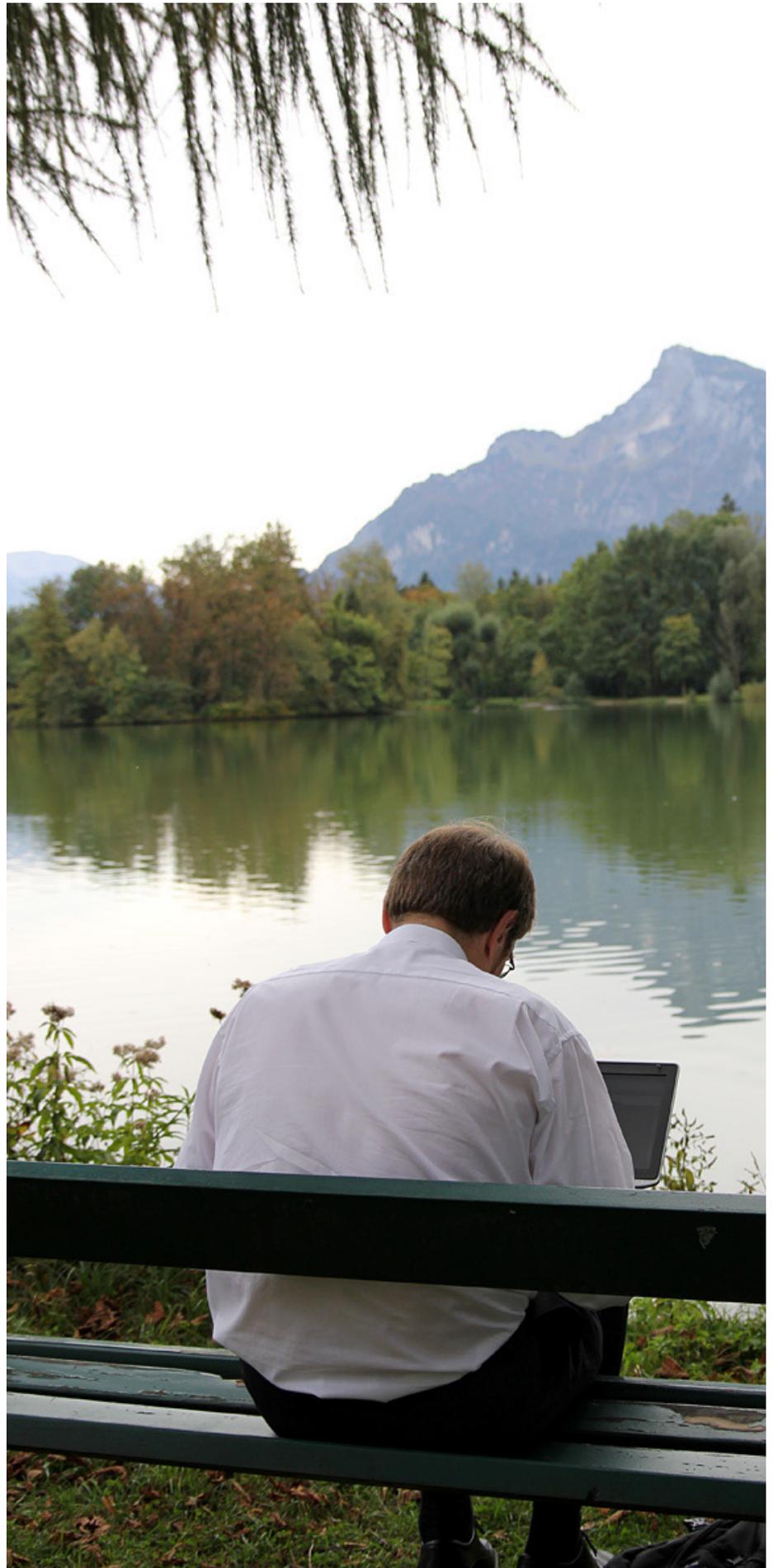
- Identify gaps and why gaps are persistent and even seem to grow
- Develop strategies
- Create a vehicle to operationalize these strategies

The idea was that the two seminars that would follow, would lead to an inspirational exchange of theories, best practices, success stories, framework concepts and critical factors taking into account and highlighting the diversity in cultural, economic and historical backgrounds but nevertheless anticipating that these differences would lead to enrichment rather than fragmentation.

If successful, the intent is to funnel the outcomes through three possible channels:

- Continue to address the themes of social mobility and achievement gaps as one strand in the series of World Congresses of Education that is anticipated
- Establish with various subsets of participants of the two seminars resource pools and communities on the web to ensure the process stays alive and to share success stories, strategies, best practices, etc. on an ongoing basis and to leverage peer review (formal/informal) to track progress.
- Where possible to form pressure Global or Regional pressure groups to inform and support advocacy and policy agendas.

In a few hours from now the 60 'drivers' at this seminar will expect to hear from the Chair of the seminar: "you have reached your destination".



Session Rapporteur Gerben van Lent, hard at work in view of the Untersberg



Session faculty member, Cecile Hoareau the University of Maastricht, speaks on equity in Europe

A FELLOW'S OPINION

Equity and Homogeneity

Caring for other people's children

By: Marybeth Gasman

In 2006, Lisa Delpit authored a powerful book titled *Other People's Children*. Although the majority of the book focuses on how school administrators often victimize students of color, she also notes that many people are comfortable with educating and supporting people like themselves. It is when people are confronted with 'other people's children' – children that often have different cultural backgrounds and look different from them, that some people become uncomfortable about supporting their education. Delpit's book and subsequent ideas remind me of discussions around educational success in countries such as Finland, Norway, and Sweden.

At the seminar 'Optimizing Talent - Closing Education and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide', one of the speakers, Cecile Hoareau of the University of Maastricht, presented a paper pertaining to equity across Europe and as expected, according to her research, those countries with the greatest level of equity in higher education were Finland, Sweden, and Norway. These same countries have been the subjects of quite a few essays written in the United States as of late. All of these essays hail the Northern European countries as role models in both K-12 and higher education. And they are. In all of these countries, education is public, free, and high levels of equity have been

achieved. These countries are proud of their success and should be. Their success leads to one central question: How can this success be replicated?

While I think this is an important and admirable question and I also think that there are important lessons to learn, people tend to forget that Finland, Sweden and Norway are homogenous countries. When Cecile Hoareau was asked about this homogeneity, she claimed that the countries were becoming more diverse. However, the percentages of non-White immigrants to Finland, Sweden and Norway are tiny. For example, people from underdeveloped nations make up less than 1 percent of the Finnish population. In Norway, 3 percent of the population is made up of immigrants from non-Western countries such as Morocco, Somalia, Iran, and Turkey. And in Sweden less than 1/2 percent of the population is Somali, which is the only critical mass of people from underdeveloped nations.

Reflecting on Delpit's ideas, people are more comfortable taking care of and educating people who are similar to them in terms of race and culture. One of the secrets of success in homogenous countries is that they are homogenous. People feel comfortable with the government providing resources to the general public because the general public looks like them. Unlike these Scandinavian countries, the United States is hugely diverse and we often think that people of our race and class work harder and

know best. Many of us differentiate based on race and judge the quality of individuals by their race – even if we do not want to admit that we do. We also often feel that if one group of people gains access and resources that we lose something. Our diversity makes us stronger, but it also makes our system deeply complicated in comparison to homogenous Scandinavian countries. These complications are exemplified in European countries such as England and France, which are experiencing more and more diversity and the challenges of inequity that surface in racially and ethnically diverse nations. According to Laura W. Perna, a participant at Salzburg Global Seminar and Professor in the Graduate School of Education at the University of Pennsylvania, "Achievement of equity is influenced by the structures in which individuals of different groups are embedded, especially the extent to which individuals of different groups have the opportunity to be adequately academically prepared to enroll and succeed in college, the financial resources necessary to pay for college, and the information required to navigate their way into and through the higher education system."

In order to achieve success the likes of the Scandinavian countries, we need to give the opportunity that Perna discusses to all citizens and realize that our lives are deeply intertwined and that our success is linked to others. We also must realize that another person's gain is not our loss. There is room for multiple and wide success in our nation. Higher education must be seen as a public good rather than a mere individual or private gain in order for us to increase our attainment and be more competitive on an international stage. We need to care about 'Other People's Children.'

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Memories of Salzburg Global Seminar So long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, goodbye!

Photos by: Rob Fish

