

Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis

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From [@Care_Esther](#) on Twitter: Look gloomy? No – there's light ahead in [#SEL](#) with first panel of "Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis" highlighting the strength in both business communities and education sectors espousing the same needs and goals [@SalzburgGlobal](#) [#OAA](#)



Addressing the supply and demand of SEL skills

The demand for social and emotional learning (SEL) skills is rising around the globe. But why?

This was one of the first questions to be addressed at the program, *Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis*, which is being held by Salzburg Global Seminar in partnership with ETS, Microsoft and Qatar Foundation International, together with the British Council, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation and the Inter-American Development Bank.

One source of demand for these skills is employers. The increasingly automated, globally linked and culturally diverse 21st century workplace will need human workers who are able to work collaboratively, think creatively and critically, solve complex problems, understand and appreciate other cultures, resolve conflicts, and be flexible and resilient in the face of constantly changing labor market demands. These are all skills that are developed through SEL.

Recognizing that employers value such skills, students and educators are also demanding that SEL be better incorporated into existing curricula.

Modern society-at-large also requires such skills. As Michael Nettles remarked in his opening speech, quoting Delhi education minister, Manish Sisodia, "If a person is going through our education system for 18 years of his life and is

becoming an engineer or a civil servant, but is still throwing litter on the ground or engaging in corruption, then can we really say that the education system is working?"

Post-conflict societies and those in the thrall of national crises are especially in need of citizens with greater SEL skills, particularly empathy and tolerance.

Resilience is a key SEL skill for both children and adults experiencing displacement and forced migration, which explains why language education providers are increasingly interested in incorporating SEL into their curriculum.

Supplying this demand is a challenge. Not only do students need to develop SEL skills, but also teachers, teacher trainers, parents, employers and existing workers. SEL thus needs to be taught in more locales than just the traditional classroom.

The establishment of SEL courses may require additional resources and funding (though some panelists argued that it could be integrated into existing subjects, such as problem-solving in math and team-building in sports and drama), but many education ministries are cash-strapped. Collaboration – a key SEL skill – is needed between schools, ministries, business and parents to address the gaps.

Answers to this demand question – and many others – will be sought over the course of the five-day program and addressed in co-written *Salzburg Statement* to be published in early 2019.

Michael Nettles: “What works in Cape Town may not work in Cardiff”

Session Co-Chair offers his opening remarks on SEL

Good afternoon. And welcome to *Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis*. Or as I like to call it, “Season 3, Episode 4 of How and Why to Get Along With Others.” Given that there are 63 headstrong intellectuals here for five days of discourse and debate, we will surely put our own social and emotional skills to the test.

I don’t know about you, but I would not have it any other way.

My name is Michael Nettles, and I am the Senior Vice President of the Policy Evaluation and Research Center at Educational Testing Service (ETS) of Princeton, NJ. I am also the co-chair of this edition of the Salzburg Global Seminar, along with Barbara Holzapfel of Microsoft Education, and Maggie Mitchell Salem of the Qatar Foundation International in Washington, DC.

I am very gratified by the tremendous interest in this topic. This is the fourth SEL seminar that we have held over the past three years. We convened the first here in Salzburg in 2016, and followed up with seminars in by the Dead Sea in Jordan and last June at ETS in Princeton in the United States, as well as spin-off meetings in Kampala and Santiago.

In all by the end of this session, more than 200 of our colleagues representing more than 50 countries will have participated in these discussions on the importance of traits variously referred to as social and emotional skills, soft skills, 21st century skills, noncognitive skills, and personality traits.

We met in various locations around the world not to spread the word about the importance of SEL. Clearly, the word was already out. Indeed, interest in the topic is so great that we have scheduled another seminar for next March here in Salzburg. Season 4, Episode 5. Rather, we went elsewhere to learn how these skills are viewed, taught and measured in different places.

It is a critical point given how geographically and culturally dependent education tends to be. What works in Cape Town may not work in Cardiff. That is certainly true in the United States, where public education is a jealously guarded local prerogative at best, and a political, cultural and racial flashpoint at worst. What works in Massachusetts will not work in Tennessee.

Perhaps no one here is more familiar with that imperative than our colleague Karen Niemi, who is the President and CEO of the University of Illinois at Chicago’s Collaborative for Academic Social & Emotional Learning, or CASEL. CASEL works directly with 20 school districts serving 1.6 million K–12 students throughout the United States to help them embed SEL into their academic programs. It is a lot of different cultures to keep track of, and no one is more effective at it than Karen.

But as a broad concept, Social and Emotional Learning is on the global education agenda — one that resonates powerfully among the most accomplished and renowned educators, researchers and policymakers throughout the world. You are proof of that.

Not that we need it, but there is other proof: The UN’s Sustainable Development Goal for Education sets a target date of 2030 “to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable ... lifestyles [characterized by respect for] human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and nonviolence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture’s contribution to sustainable development.”

The Global Pull of Soft Skills

It is fair to ask why there is so much interest in the subject. The answer, I think we can all agree, is that social and emotional skills are foundational to individual, and thus community and global wellbeing.

As for the precise definition of those skills, that too depends on geography and culture. The Big Five provide a framework: extroversion, agreeableness, openness, conscientiousness, and neuroticism. But everyone further defines them in their own way, and context matters.

As head of the Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, our colleague Dr. Jennifer Adams identified 10 critical “exit outcomes” for students. According to this approach, students should graduate being:

- goal oriented,
- ethical decision makers,
- academically diverse,
- effective communicators,
- resilient,

- digitally fluent,
- innovative and creative,
- globally aware,
- critical thinkers, and
- collaborative.

That is a bit different from the approach taken in Manizales, Colombia, by the Urban Active School — the Escuela Activa Urbana, or EAU. The EAU encourages an active teaching model focused on classroom participation, democracy, tolerance, respect, conflict resolution, cooperation, collaboration, teamwork, leadership, and student motivation.

Our colleague Maria Cortelezzi, Executive Director of Argentina’s Proyecto Educar 2050, and two co-authors examined the EAU’s approach in a 2014 article for the PREAL blog of the Inter-American Dialogue’s Education Program. They concluded that EAU students learn more than other public-school students at both the cognitive and noncognitive levels, particularly with regard to emotional development and development of students’ social skills.

Manizales and Ottawa, incidentally, are two of the 11 cities around the world participating in the OECD’s Study on Social and Emotional Skills of 10- and 15-year-old students.

On the other side of the world, Manish Sisodia, the Delhi minister of education, who had hoped to be with us but is being ably represented by Shailendra Sharma, is overseeing a “happiness curriculum” for students in nursery up to class VIII at all Delhi government schools. The curriculum, which Minister Sisodia and the Dalai Lama launched last July, includes meditation, moral values and mental exercises, and is aimed at helping students solve problems caused by negative and destructive emotions such as anger, hatred and jealousy.

To quote from the Delhi Directorate of Education, “the primary purpose of education has to be to create happy, confident and fulfilled human beings, who will play a meaningful role in society. ... Self-aware, sensitive and emotionally mature children are far more successful owing to their advanced ability to engage in meaningful relationships with their friends, family and society.”

As Minister Sisodia put it in an interview with *The Washington Post*, “If a person is going through our education system for 18 years of his life and is becoming an engineer or a civil servant, but is still throwing litter on the ground or engaging in corruption, then can we really

say that the education system is working?”

Back around the globe again, Marc Brackett of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence is the lead developer of an evidence-based approach to SEL that is centered on a different Big Five emotion skills: Recognizing, Understanding, Labeling, Expressing and Regulating emotions — or RULER. RULER aims to integrate social and emotional learning into the DNA of schools by enhancing how school administrators lead, how teachers teach, how students learn and how families parent.

Research has shown that RULER improves academic performance; decreases bullying and other in-school problems; enriches the classroom atmosphere; reduces teacher stress and burnout; and enhances instructional practices. The RULER approach has been adopted by more than 1,500 public, charter and private pre-school to high schools in the United States, Australia, China, England, Italy, Mexico, Spain, and Sri Lanka.

Assessment

So SEL is not just catching on. It has caught on.

With changes in curriculum come — or SHOULD come — changes in assessment. Whether we ultimately make effective and meaningful use of SEL will depend on whether we develop and deploy effective and meaningful ways to assess soft skills, and put the test data to effective, meaningful and, importantly, affordable use.

In fact, Catherine Millett, who hosted the opening conversation on SEL in December 2016, posed a question to Koji Miyamoto and me about the contextual challenges that arise when it comes to measurement and how can we overcome these challenges of using common measures in Africa, Asia, Latin America and in other parts of the world. Koji and I obviously did not provide a sufficient answer, and that is another reason why we are all here today.

That is where we are now.

Of course, assessing tolerance and collaboration are substantially more complex than assessing math or reading. Simply defining socio-emotional constructs can be elusive, especially in the absence of identifiable learning progressions, as our colleague Esther Care, of the Brookings Institution in Washington, DC, notes in a co-authored report published in October.

Even then, the same geographic and

cultural variations that characterize education in general raise equally complex issues of cross-cultural validity. If you think education is culturally specific, I would submit that acceptable social and emotional attitudes and behaviors are culturally specific on steroids.

As Esther Care and her Brookings colleagues put it, “Challenges specific to assessment of 21st century skills may be one reason why education systems are having difficulty translating policies into actual practice in schools and classrooms.”

Addressing that variation is an aim of the OECD’s Study on Social and Emotional Skills — to produce a set of validated international instruments to measure social and emotional skills of school-aged children; and to demonstrate that valid, reliable, and comparable information on social and emotional skills can be produced across diverse student populations and settings, and to identify the policies, practices and other conditions that help or hinder the development of these critical skills.

I should point out that ETS is advising the OECD on SEL measures. Among our other activities in this area, we are also:

- examining SEL measures in the context of the United States Department of Education’s National Assessment of Educational Progress;
- developing a situational judgment test for middle and high school students for the Wallace Foundation, a New York City-based philanthropy that works to improve learning and enrichment for disadvantaged children and foster the vitality of the arts for everyone;
- designing a survey of teachers, school leaders and administrators on the value of noncognitive assessments and the clarity of score reporting;
- integrating into our data analyses and publications such affective measures as communication skills, achievement motivation, intellectual engagement, sociability, working independently, time management, leadership and risk-taking; and
- advising CASEL’s Assessment Work Group.

What’s New Is Old

It is an exciting area of education, research and assessment. It all seems very new! And yet it is not at all new to those of us at ETS. Henry Chauncey, the founder and first president of my organization, was pondering the importance of soft

skills in 1949. In handwritten notebooks that Catherine Millett and I discovered in the ETS archives some months ago, Chauncey pondered what he called the “non-intellectual factors which affect success or failure.”

He was interested in investigating such “personal qualities” as “drive ... motivation ... conscientiousness, intellectual stamina ... ability to get along with others” as ways to “ascertain whether [an] individual will be [a] good member of the community, in college and later in life, in any one of the many ways that one can contemplate ...”

Considering that he wrote these notes just a few years after the end of a World War and at the dawn of the Atomic Age, it is perhaps not surprising that devising ways to improve social and emotional skills might have been of concern.

In some ways, teaching social and emotional skills is the most conservative tradition in education. One need not subscribe to any particular catechism to see in the Big Five emanations of what the Golden Rule, the New Testament injunction to “do unto others as you would have them do unto you.”

Somewhat further back, Aristotle asserted that “Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all,” an observation that is featured in a brochure of Dr. Brackett’s Center for Emotional Intelligence at Yale.

More recently, the Dalai Lama has pointed out that one seeks enlightenment not for oneself but for the benefit of all beings.

I could say that the world could use a little more of that these days! In that context, rather than lament the current crop of world leaders who seem oddly enamored of intolerance, xenophobia and scapegoating, perhaps we can view them as our best advertisements for effective Social and Emotional Learning curricula. As the saying goes, “Thank you. You are my teacher.”

But we better hurry since we may be just one tweet away from catastrophe.

Once again, welcome. And I look forward to learning from you all over the next few days.





Fellowship Manager, Jan Heinecke leads the traditional first-night tour of Schloss Leopoldskron. Photos courtesy of Horacio Marquinez

HOT TOPIC:

Why is there a demand for SEL and who is driving this?

Kwasi Asiedu & Anna Rawe

“Demand for social and emotional skills is being driven by the students themselves. We conducted some research, published at the start of this year, where we asked 4000 students to prioritise the skills that they feel were most important for their education and 50% of them placed social and emotional skills in their top three

When we asked the question around ‘how prepared are young people now for the world of work?’, employers have also said the area they lacked the most were social emotional skills; the ability to persist, to work with one another, to self-regulated, to be self-aware.

We also looked at what the future of work might require. If we take the impact of automation, changing the nature of many occupational categories and then we project them to what the roles of the future might place a premium on, between 30% and 40% of growth jobs for place a premium on and emotional skills. Essentially having humans do what they do best and allowing artificial intelligence and advanced technologies to do what it does best.”

Mark Sparvall

Thought Leader for Education, Microsoft, USA

“The demand is coming from a variety of different levels... Our students are telling us they are very aware of the world and they are telling us what they want to be learning and how they want to be learning. And they are very specific as far as the what they want to learn: the kinds of skills to be engaged citizens, productive, have good employment opportunities and basically, be able to live a happy life... They want to learn in a very interactive type of pedagogy where they are learning to have opportunities to learn from each other, they have the opportunity to learn deeply themselves and they have a teacher that facilitates that as opposed to

transacting knowledge and skills...

[Also], the business community is recognizing that technical skills change so quickly that they know that they’ve an obligation to be able to continue technical skill development. What they’re looking for in students when they come in is that they are good communicators, they are ethical decision makers, they can work collaboratively, resilient, they show up to work on time, all those types of skills where it doesn’t matter what sector the students are going into, those are important to skills.

We quickly realized that teachers can’t teach those skills unless they as adults have them themselves. If a teacher doesn’t collaborate with fellow teachers, it is very hard to create a learning environment in the classroom where students are learning together... It’s not just about teaching the children [but we have to also] facilitate opportunities so that the adults in our system are developing those skills as well.”

Jennifer Adams

Director of Education, Ottawa-Carleton District School Board, Canada

“I think what’s driving demand for SEL is the times we live in... There are deep fractures in societies for different reasons, and the space for reasonable conversation seems to be disappearing and people are building walls instead of trying to find common ground. I think teachers deal with that every day in communities, whether it’s bullying, whether it’s countries that are struggling to take in citizens or just temporarily relocating citizens from countries that are war-torn, refugees or migrants. Everyone is struggling with some aspect of how do we create more inclusive communities.”

Maggie Mitchell Salem

Executive Director, Qatar Foundation International, USA

“I think there are several factors [driving demand for SEL]. One is coming from the business field... Ironically they realize that people who have those soft skills are better at producing their work, so it comes from an economical and financial [motivation]. Also, from an educational perspective, I think in our societies where we have a lot of exclusion, a lot of people who live in the margins of society, a lot of war, a lot of conflict, I think it’s becoming really urgent to develop these skills, and not developing them in parallel with the existing curricula but integrating them within the formal education. So when you come and learn some maths you also learn to work in a team and value your team members’ point of view and collaborate and problem solve, etc.”

Leyla Alkoury-Dirani

Associate Professor, American University of Beirut (AUB), Lebanon

“In the Sri Lankan context, there are two driving factors. One is that as a society as a whole: moving in a post-conflict environment, after having a conflict that last for three decades, there is a strong need for Social and Emotional Learning in our younger generation to ensure that we don’t get into such a circumstance in the future. And that, together with the political chaos and sporadic religious and ethnic violence that we see throughout the country, demands that social and emotional skills are integrated into the educational system so that we have a generation of young people coming into the society as leaders and citizens who would have all those values and traits of a global citizen, who embrace diversity and have respect for the differences in their society.”

Manjula Dissanayake

Founding President, Educate Sri Lanka

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