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.

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.

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.

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.

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.
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.

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 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.
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 you 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

“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

“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 you 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

“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

“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 you 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

“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
Education policies are often introduced but then thrown out on the changing of administrations, political or otherwise. To avoid this, social and emotional learning (SEL) needs to be adopted at a systems level.

As experts from India, the US, New Zealand and Kenya explained on the first full day of Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis, integrating SEL at a systems level needs buy-in from all actors in the education system.

In schools, SEL should be encouraged not only for students, but also teachers and all other staff throughout the school. Outside of individual schools, buy-in is needed from the school districts and local education administration, such as having someone within the school district who is responsible and can advocate for SEL.

The buy-in of parents and students is also vital to ensuring the long-term support for and success of SEL. Parents complain that time spent on SEL programs is a “time-taker” from the more traditionally revered academic subjects, but evidence shows improved SEL can in fact be a “time-maker” as it enables students to better engage, pay attention, and process information, as well as work more collaboratively with their peers in a more learning-conducive environment thanks to reduced anti-social behavior, such as classroom disruption or bullying.

Unable to travel to Salzburg but undeterred from sharing his innovative policy, Delhi education minister Manish Sisodia filmed a video that morning in a city classroom to introduce the “Happiness Class.” This program is a new addition to schools’ curriculum in the Indian capital and aims to improve students’ mindfulness and confidence, which in turn will have an impact on their attainment in their other academic subjects.

SEL does not have to be delivered as a separate course such as the Happiness Class (see back page), but can instead be integrated into other subject areas. Languages, literature and geography can help develop cultural awareness and empathy; history teaches critical thinking; and team-building can be developed through PE and drama, for example.

Achieving system-wide transformation thus needs both a top-down and a bottom-up approach, but bottom-up need not start only with the parents, teachers and students. High-ranking local officials, such as school superintendents in the US, can be powerful advocates in spreading change outward and upward.

The Politics of Reform

Finland is often asked, “What’s your secret?” when it comes to education reform. Is it the teacher training? Is it the integrated curriculum? Is it the overarching education policy?

But as it was pointed out on the panel “SEL and the Politics of Education Reform,” there is no single secret ingredient. “We have many building blocks,” pointed out the Finnish panelist; combined, these blocks have built a successful education system, but these blocks are not easy to replicate wholesale in another country.

When testing and rolling out new programs, the following advice was given: “Start small, learn fast, and fail well.” Evidence collection, evaluation, and adaptation are all important prior to scaling up. But this approach was not deemed appropriate for all contexts, with another Fellow pointing out on Twitter: “Doesn’t work in an Indian context where the numbers are huge and contexts are diverse. Innovations in education have not traditionally scaled.”

Introducing the oxymoron for the day, one panelist urged SEL implementation should be “compulsorily voluntary,” i.e. everyone should do it, but how SEL is delivered should be determined by the local context.

Context matters. As another panelist added, “What works in one country might not work in another; what works in one school might not work in another; what works for one child might not work for another.” (After all, even McDonald’s, which pride itself on its global universal standards, adapts to local markets!)

With so many different actors involved in delivering SEL education reform – from individual teachers and schools to policymakers and politicians, researchers and other advocates – efforts need to be made to “network autonomous actors” and guide their direction. A key ingredient to achieving this networking and thus implementing successful education reform is trust. Trust needs to be developed at all levels, from the teachers to the ministry.
Wolfgang Irber: Translating Complexity into Simplicity

As a self-confessed non-expert on SEL, graphic facilitator and business illustrator captures the “key messages” he’s hearing at Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis

With an academic background in geology and geochemistry and a previous career in telecommunications, business illustrator and Salzburg Global Fellow, Wolfgang Irber is not shy about admitting that he came to Salzburg this week knowing very little about Social and Emotional Learning.

But in his role as graphic facilitator for the program, he’s “translating” the complex ideas being presented by the expert Fellows into simple messages to help reach a non-expert audience.

What do you think? If you have opinions on his work or suggestions of other key messages that could be illustrated, Wolfgang is eager to hear from you! You can find him sketching in the corner of Parker Hall, as well attending all meals and coffee breaks.

If you wish to reuse any of these images, please contact Salzburg Global Strategic Communications Manager, Louise Hallman: lhallman@salzburgglobal.org

Photos from the program can be found on facebook.com/SalzburgGlobal
What works for my school, may not work for my university.
No McDonalds approach, please.
Yuck!
Yummy!

How do we quantify the expectations in SEL?

If I put in x amount of money, what is the amount of skill increase I will get?
No idea!

If the wellbeing is not there, the learning is not there.

In order to convince politicians you have to show facts

Do NOT start with the tools when talking to teachers about SEL, start with the emotions.

If teachers are SEL competent, they will create a better learning environment

The teacher may be the best person to introduce SEL in the classroom

With SEL teachers will gain not lose time

Last but not least, we will become better teachers.
My take on [whether to integrate SEL or not] is in the early years of learning, it should be integrated into other learning areas because you also don’t want to provide a lot of content in the learning areas, or take it as a standalone subject because there isn’t a whole lot you want to tell little children... After mid-level, I think my take is that it should be integrated. We should only look for host subjects that can comfortably accommodate. In the senior level, then you can treat it as separate discipline, and that’s what we are doing in Kenya.”

Grace Maina
Curriculum Specialist, Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development

“To me SEL is about humanity and everything we do, so therefore it cannot be separated. For me it’s got to flip the other way, where SEL is the baseline and then content areas need to be slotted into SEL. So when I’m designing learning or when I’m working with countries and they’re designing learning, we are talking about real life situations that require strong SEL tools and processes, and then what are the content areas that align themselves to learn through that.”

Joanne McEachen
Global New Measures Director,
New Pedagogies for Deep Learning, USA

“It needs to be both, and the reason for that... [is] if we have an explicit topic that sits alone that’s a positive step forward, because it prescribes, basically this is the minimum standard that we will actually focus on Social and Emotional Learning, but of course it’s not sufficient. It’s important, but not sufficient. Really we need to do that and make sure we’ve embedded those learnings in rich ways with rich curriculum and content – what disposition are we trying to create here, what skill-set are we trying to create? – and then finding content that supports that notion, as opposed to the old traditional model of schooling, which is: what’s the content we need to teach?”

Louka Parry
Director of Academy and Training,
Education Changemakers, Australia

“I believe it’s both, I don’t take a position on either. I think that it is really critical... Reading has its own subject area and you can’t do social studies, or science or math without knowing how to read, so reading is integrated into all subjects, and I think SEL should be integrated into all subjects. But I also think that it deserves its own place in terms of children’s knowledge development, skill development... I do believe that from pre-school all the way up, that children should get a formal education in social and emotional skills and that it should be aligned with their social and cognitive development. But at the same time I think there’s a perfect opportunity to integrate this into every subject area.”

Marc Brackett
Director, Yale Centre for Emotional Intelligence, USA

“It has to start as a standalone exercise, but gradually it should be integrated into other subjects because the whole purpose of learning is: If you learn maths, you learn calculations, but how do you apply it in your life? If you are learning science and you become a doctor, how would you use your medical practice ethically? ... So as a result this exercise – Social and Emotional Learning – needs to be integrated with the school curriculum... Maybe if we are beginning, it is possible that you can introduce [SEL] as a matter of practice so that the teachers get more acquainted with the methodology. But, as we move on, the idea, at least in Delhi, is: whatever subject you are teaching, apply the learning of the process that you learned while transacting your happiness class into teaching the subject that you are teaching.”

Shailendra Sharma
Principal Advisor to the Director of Education,
Delhi City Government, India
As technology has become ubiquitous in our lives, concerns have been raised about its negative impact. Despite this, tech can still be a positive enhancement for SEL development. Across all areas, technology can help work across distances and at scales not otherwise possible. When considering how technology can be used to enhance learning of any kind, but especially SEL, the initial question should not simply be "what can tech do?" but rather "what do teachers and learners need?" Fellows at Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis were warned that simply "bringing in innovative tools doesn't lead to innovative practice."

Video conferencing, for example, is already being used to good effect in classrooms for purposes such as language learning. In social and emotional learning, key skills to be developed are communication, collaboration, cultural and understanding. Video conferencing can help here too. Microsoft’s annual “Skype-athon” connects students in classrooms across the world to share their learning experiences and daily lives with each other. Further enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI)-driven live translation tools, these exchanges can transcend linguistic barriers.

In diverse school communities, especially those serving large numbers of refugee and migrant children, live translation tools – either using text or audio – can greatly improve parental engagement, such as at parent-teacher conferences, reducing the costly need for human interpreters.

Gamification is also being used to great effect in other areas of education, and now too in SEL. Edutech company Immersive Minds are using the popular online game Minecraft to address students’ understanding of the refugee crisis. By playing through different scenarios and collaborating with students around the world (again aided by live translation tools), students explore what it is like to be forced to leave home, to have power and have it taken away from them, to need to trust people, and ultimately to have empathy.

Even in schools without access to the latest devices and easy connectivity, tech can help open up philosophical debates that are important for students to develop their SEL skills. "Is it OK to kill people in World of Warcraft?", "Can I be rude to Siri/Alexa?" and "Who’s responsible for self-driving cars?" can all prompt interesting ethical debates.
What Is the Place of SEL in Our Violent World?

Social and Emotional Learning can help create a safe space that wins at-risk youths away from violent crime

Kwasi Asiedu

In the past 12 months, there have been more than 62,000 murders in Brazil, a record high even for a country that has experienced violent crime for decades. A significant proportion of perpetrators and victims of this violence are young men and women from disadvantaged backgrounds.

An increasingly militarized police force has done little to help reduce the problem. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) could be another effective strategy to win at-risk youths away from drug gangs and hence reduce violent crime, says Tonia Casarin.

Casarin is the founder and chief executive officer of Fireworks Education, a company that promotes SEL in Brazil. She is one of over 60 participants of the Salzburg Global Seminar program, Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis (December 2 to 7, 2018).

“We do curriculum development and teacher training in social and emotional learning and also we do a lot of content development in social and emotional learning for kids, teenagers, adults, parents and teachers,” she says.

Of the importance of SEL, Casarin says: “there is a lot of research [that shows] that if we develop social and emotional skills in kids, they will have great results in the long term for themselves as individuals and also they will make better decisions not only for themselves but also for the society. It is not only for professional success but also health and happiness.

“Even adults don’t know how to identify their emotions and understand them, so as part of the emotional intelligence framework...I said [to myself], ‘why not start early?...[because] if we do early interventions, we, of course, will have better results in the long term.’

To this end, Casarin is the author of two best-selling children’s books in Brazil: I Have Monsters in My Tummy and I Have More Monsters in My Tummy, which she says helps children to “learn the vocabulary of emotion so that they can express and self-regulate themselves [so that they can gain] this main ability of emotional intelligence.”

Casarin has also been working on a project in Sobral, a city in the north-east of Brazil, which is helping to develop the SEL skills of teachers as one of the ways to help reduce the number of youths falling into organized crime.

She says “We talked a lot about how to build a safe space in the classroom for the kids and after the classroom, the [whole] school. That is because maybe the classroom is the only safe space some of those kids have so [the teachers have] started to realize the importance of building that to leverage the sense of belonging [in] these kids so that they are not on the streets anymore.”

If the students can be kept comfortably in the safety of school instead of wandering the streets without clear purpose, Casarin says they are at a much lower risk of getting into contact with gang recruiters. She adds: “And when they are not [in school], they can also reflect on their role in society. So they can decide what is better for me as an individual: ‘Is it a good thing to go out with the drug dealers?’ [This helps to] also build autonomy and self-care.”

Brazil is not the only country where SEL skills are being leveraged to help in violence reduction; in Sri Lanka too, it is being used to support conflict resolution and peace building.

“After having a conflict that lasted 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,” says Manjula Dissanayake, founding executive director of Educate Lanka, a non-profit social enterprise based in the US but operating in Sri Lanka. Dissanayake is also one of the participants of this session. Aside from providing cash transfers which ensures that students can cover outstanding school bills, Educate Lanka is in the business of mentoring and guidance aimed at instilling positive values in Sri Lanka’s future leaders.

The latter is especially significant because while the dark clouds of war no longer hang on the island nation, it still experiences sporadic cases of ethnic and religious violence. This demands that “social and emotional skills are integrated into the educational system,” says Dissanayake, “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.”
Measuring and Assessing SEL

If what’s measured is treasured, then measuring SEL should help to better establish its place in schools’ curricula. But how can and should SEL be assessed and measured?

As one panelist in Salzburg advised, before assessing social and emotional skills, we need to ask three questions:
1. What do we need to know?
2. Why do we need to know this?
3. What are we want to do with the data?

If we have a clear answers about need and purpose for that data, then we have a good reason to assess SEL skills. This assessment might either be to assess the student’s individual progress in developing specific skills or to help assess the efficacy of an SEL program.

In 2015 and 2016, Salzburg Global Seminar held two programs on this topic: Untapped Talent: Can better testing and data accelerate creativity in learning and societies? and Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills, respectively. Both programs produced statements and reports (available at www.salzburgglobal.org/go/education), with the latter offering the following key principals for SEL measurement:
• Different instruments should be developed for each age group;
• Measurement should rely on instruments that enhance feedback and reflection;
• SEL assessment should move from fixed measurement to multiple evaluations over time, or continuous evaluation;
• SEL assessment should combine multiple perspectives, from different actors: self-assessment, peer assessment, two teachers (at least) and parents, to gain greater precision; and
• Measurement systems should be based on low-stakes assessment at the school levels but use high-stakes assessments at the central level.

Whatever method of assessment is used, assessors need to be mindful of the pitfalls of assessment and avoid instilling the temptation to “teach to the test”.

Tech-Enhanced SEL Education (in pictures)
HOT TOPIC: Should SEL Be Measured? If So, How?

Anna Rawe

“There’s some very general social and emotional factors that can be assessed at pretty much any age, so starting when students enter all the way through school, what changes is how you carry out that assessment. The most valid assessments we have now are one where, in the early years, it has to be completed by a teacher [because] the student isn’t capable of self-assessing. There’s a lack of awareness and lack of reading skills that prevents that from happening... [In] third or fourth grade you can begin to ask a student to self-assess and you can couple that with teacher assessments, or not. For the most part we do these kinds of assessments with ratings scales, looking at scales of teachers’ ratings or students’ self-ratings. But, more and more there is beginning to be developed performance assessment tasks, so we are looking forward to the day when we have a whole suite of task designed to measure social and emotional skills that depend on students performing some kind of task.”

Patrick Kyllonen
Distinguished presidential appointee, Educational Testing Service (ETS), USA

“I think that we need to set objectives [that are] very clear, for what group of social and emotional skills we need to assess in a particular context. For example, what a country needs could be different for other countries... The age is so important because, for example, little children cannot respond or answer [using] scales; we have to look for adequate ways to assess. I think that all of these questions are still remaining unanswered... We need much more research about this.”

Humberto Perez Leon Ibanez
Head, Learning Quality Measurement Office, Ministry of Education, Peru

“We are right in the middle of that question right now in India. We’ve got partners to develop instruments, we’re asking questions... Even if you assess how are you going to integrate that? Should children’s social and emotional skills see a year-on-year increase? The sector only understands linear growth... [For those over 7 or 8 years old] measurement for me at this point of time is really important to set a sense of urgency. There’s literature saying its important, but we don’t know how bad it is in India... Measurement is critical to be able to understand what are we even dealing with, [but] what is the baseline?”

Sukhmani Sethi
Program Manager, Porticus, India

“I think there’s a difference between assessing and monitoring, or reporting. In terms of assessment test-type of activities, I would say no. We have in Scotland... SHANARRI [Safe, Healthy, Achieving, Nurtured, Active, Respected, Responsible and Included] indicators... We’ve got a curriculum [where] children have certain capacities that include being effective contributors, responsible citizens, successful learners, and so on. Then we have national policy, which is ‘Getting it right for every child’, which applies to schools but it’s a multi-agency approach – it’s not just down to teachers to make sure that children are OK... Schools use the SHANARRI indicators and children look at children and look at how they’re doing using a range of these indicators and then we build up a picture of how the child is doing... It’s a rounded picture rather than test assessment.”

Linda Brownlow – Head, School of Education, University of Strathclyde, Scotland, UK

Have an opinion on our HOT TOPIC? Tweet @SalzburgGlobal with the hashtag #SGSedu

Write for us!

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 email your submission to Salzburg Global’s Strategic Communications Manager, Louise Hallman: lhallman@salzburgglobal.org.

Whether writing articles or Tweeting, please make sure to observe the Chatham House Rule (information on which is in your Welcome Pack).

We’ve been writing summaries from this week’s panels and interviews with some of our Fellows for our website, all of which you can find on the session page: SalzburgGlobal.org/go/603 and you are welcome to republish any of this content on your own websites.

At the end of the session, you will find photos and Wolfgang’s illustrations available to download on flickr.com/SalzburgGlobal. Hi-res, unwatermarked images can be provided. Please email Louise.
Teachers and education policymakers from all over the world have left Salzburg determined to continue efforts to mainstream social and emotional learning (SEL) in schools globally. The six-day program, titled Social and Emotional Learning: A Global Synthesis, brought together more than 60 participants working in various educational subfields from curriculum to psychology and testing to training. The program was held in partnership with Educational Testing Service, Microsoft, Qatar Foundation International, the British Council, the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, and the Inter-American Development Bank. The program at Schloss Leopoldskron was a follow-up to an offsite program which took place in Princeton, New Jersey in June 2018.

Last week, participants engaged in a series of plenary discussions that touched on the demand for SEL, the politics of educational reform, teacher preparation and measurement and assessment. During the plenaries, participants reflected on case studies involving several countries including Finland, Mexico, Kenya, and Sri Lanka.

A video message from Delhi’s Minister of Education, Manish Sisodia, which involved him explaining the introduction of a Happiness Curriculum in the Indian capital, also resonated with participants. The place of social and emotional learning in post-conflict societies and those dealing with ongoing violence was also examined in detail.

Participants were taken to task to work in small knowledge cafes and working groups for more intimate deliberations and to come up with ideas which could contribute to the drafting of a Salzburg Statement in the future.

Recommendations from the working groups included a global alliance of organizations working in SEL and new, effective ways of testing the efficacy of incorporating SEL in the curriculum. Initiating a worldwide SEL Day to celebrate and raise awareness about the possibilities of SEL was also mooted.

Working groups have also agreed to advance conversations about their specific topics with a series of Twitter debates.

It’s not only participants who will look to take the work forward. Salzburg Global and partners are continuing to look ahead in this field.

In March 2019, a new cohort of participants will convene again at Schloss Leopoldskron, in Salzburg, Austria, to review the topic with a new focus - Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action.
Transforming the Citizens of Tomorrow through SEL

Salzburg Global explores SEL practices in India

India's population is approaching 1.35 billion. With 29 states and seven union territories, a one-size-fits-all model might not be appropriate for its education system. Changes to just one region, or even city, can affect vast numbers of people.

An example of this is in Delhi, through the emergence of a happiness curriculum. Launched by the Dalai Lama, the policy is a considerable shift towards social and emotional learning (SEL). The Delhi Government is responsible for 1,000 schools, around 20,000 teachers and 1.5 million students. It provides happiness classes for students from nursery to Grade Eight.

These classes often take place at the beginning of the day and have three parts: mindfulness exercises, a story, and a discussion where every student has to speak. Students are encouraged to question teachers instead of just writing and memorizing.

Shailendra Sharma is the principal advisor to the director of education for the Government of NCT Delhi. In his position, he was heavily involved in reforms which he hopes will develop mindfulness, critical thinking, and empathy in Delhi students.

When asked why the Delhi Government made this ambitious move, Sharma said, “Privately, everybody would complain about the aggression, maladjustment, corruption, you name it, and these are issues that are cited. They would all expect that something should be done in the school, ‘We are not doing enough.’ But, these two narratives [of social problems and SEL] were not converging, and through [the] happiness curriculum, we have attempted to bring about this convergence.” Sharma believes unless societal issues are addressed in schools, systems will not transform, and another generation will carry on cycles of behavior.

He hopes this mandated happiness class is the first step in introducing SEL principles to Delhi classrooms, and once teachers get used to the methods used, they will integrate them with their lessons throughout the day.

However, SEL is still not widely visible in India’s education system. Despite this issue, there are other informal avenues for SEL to take place, as Dream a Dream in Bangalore demonstrates. The organization currently works with 10,000 young people through its School Life Skills and Career Connect programs, with the aim of helping young people overcome adversity and thrive.

Vishal Talreja was working in investment banking before he set up Dream a Dream in 2000. Talreja had the desire to spread the idea “every human being is unique and special, and they need to be respected for who they are, irrespective of the background they come from.” But this leads to a dilemma. Talreja asks, “How do we enable that in a society that largely has been established on a strong caste and class system?”

Talreja suggests more needs to be done within education to move away from the system inherited from India’s colonial past. Talreja wishes education could do more to encourage the traits of empathy, respect, and dignity that nurture citizens of tomorrow.

He believes SEL has a vital role to play in helping children living in poverty by facilitating them as they learn to learn, build life skills, and encourage them to help others. Talreja has found kids that have been through his program want to go on to become active citizens in their communities, and currently, 40% of their 92 people strong team are graduates from Dream a Dream programs.

Dream a Dream has grown massively in the 18 years it’s been active, but how can SEL be spread on a nationwide scale in India? Sukhmani Sethi, program manager for Porticus, in Delhi, believes philanthropy has an essential role in the SEL space in India.

Sethi says, “Philanthropy really helps amplify a voice or a theory of change, because... if a couple of funders back up a certain approach... that voice for that approach gets amplified. I think that’s how those kinds of approaches get traction by even policymakers.”

Sethi studied history at Delhi University where her professors encouraged her to “invest in knowing more about outside your bubbles.” She ended up in educational research by accepting a job at Pratham, an NGO, which changed her understanding of privilege. Now, she aims to move the needle on SEL in India and encourage school systems to look at a child’s development as a whole, and she looks for others who share the same goal.

Different charitable funders could be vital in helping provide opportunities for researchers and organizations who can help deliver the social and emotional learning that is key to children’s development. As Vishal Talreja says “If you want to impact how society looks in the future, then you have to impact children today.”

By Anna Rawe
Your Salzburg Snapshots!

Toward the end of the program, our photographer Sandra Birklbauer captured photos of participants working hard in their working groups at Schloss Leopoldskron. A selection of these photos can be seen below.

These photos have also been uploaded to Facebook and Flickr. Fellows are welcome to use these photos in other publications. We only ask, in return, you credit Salzburg Global Seminar/Sandra Birklbauer.
HOT TOPIC: What was your take-away from this week?

Anna Rawe

“I learned a lot during this conference. I’m quite new in the field of SEL, but in Uruguay, we are implementing the new pedagogies, which is mainly the introduction of cross-curricular competencies in the Uruguayan curriculum, which is a very traditional one. We don’t have a specific line of work in SEL but it’s quite connected to some of the content in the cross-curricular competencies, so I wanted to learn to explore the field. I learned a lot from very interesting people here, coming from the academic field... from different areas. The fact that we had people from many countries, and even continents, it was useful and interesting.”

Claudia Brovetto, Uruguay
Cluster Lead of New Pedagogies for Deep Learning (NPDL) at Plan Ceibal

“What I think is that SEL, it’s good that we talk about it, but we need to make sure that evidence actually comes into policies. That’s actually one of the main - I guess - conclusions but at the same time unresolved issues. I don’t think we are going to be able to find an answer, not even in one, two or even three weeks because it’s an ongoing process. But I think it should be one of the main goals or next steps after this [program] ends... [we need to] raise awareness, of course, among policymakers, educators... to bridge the divide... between horizontal and vertical you need to engage policymakers because they are the only ones who can transform a nationwide education system.”

Carine Allaf, USA
Senior Programs Advisor at Qatar Foundation International (QFI)

“It’s really impressive and inspiring to get this sense of energy from people from very different educational backgrounds, with their thinking coalescing around some really core ideas related to SEL. Now, not everyone uses the language of SEL, but the core ideas and the strength and determination that we should make progress on this agenda is really inspiring... I’m inspired and motivated by that. I think some of the challenges that have come out... about how do we gain political support, both with ‘big P’ political with ministers, but also ‘small p’ political across multiple players to get SEL approaches accepted as fundamental to education... [and] the absolute criticality of teachers and local contexts [stood out to me]. So, while we have to create a successful movement at a high level... with the structure of [the] educational system, I think at the most basic level it will come down to individual teachers changing their pedagogy, their practice, [and] their approach.”

Mark Herbert, UK
Director of Schools and Skills Programs at the British Council

“What did I take from here? Well, definitely the main thing, and that’s what Salzburg Global Seminar is about, is the experience from the people that are [active] in the field of social and emotional learning at international level. For the Gulbenkian Foundation, developing work in this field which we started recently, to test it here, to collect opinions, to collect positive criticism, to collect ideas, to share opportunities, to build partnerships for the future are the main benefits... Our project is based on the role communities can play in SEL alongside schools, definitely promoting SEL... Contexts matter in SEL... the context to work collaboratively and solve problems is in the community... we believe that the real world context in the local community is very important for SEL because SEL can not only be theoretical, it doesn’t work like other sciences, it has to have a context so that the skills can be applied... I believe that’s a major message from our group”

Bruno Macedo, Portugal
Project Manager at Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation

Have an opinion on our HOT TOPIC? Tweet @SalzburgGlobal with the hashtag #SGSedu