Change-makers from across the world have convened at Schloss Leopoldskron in Salzburg, Austria, to develop recommendations that can create better education outcomes and life chances for refugees, displaced people, and their host communities.

For the next few days, experts, policymakers, and practitioners from a wide range of backgrounds will take part in Salzburg Global Seminar’s latest program, Education and Workforce Opportunities for Refugees and Migrants. Salzburg Global is hosting the program in partnership with ETS, Microsoft, Qatar Foundation International, Porticus, and – for the first time – the LEGO Foundation.

Participants will build on the 2019 Global Education Monitoring Report and Salzburg Global’s recent work on social and emotional learning (SEL) and multilingualism. Salzburg Global is delighted to welcome back several Fellows for the program, as well as representatives from Karanga: The Global Alliance for SEL and Life Skills.

After welcome remarks and introductions on Sunday afternoon, participants engaged in a discussion titled “Pivot to the Future: Refugees, Migrants, and the Workforce of Tomorrow.” Among the talking points raised, participants heard, “The types of skills and competencies employers want come from SEL.” Industries are increasingly asking for SEL skills, such as team building and leadership. And these are the skills most people globally want their children to come away with once they finish their education: creativity, happiness, compassion, and leadership capabilities.

A refugee educational framework for SEL, when implemented correctly, could be positioned just so to create workforce opportunities for the entire global economy. For these opportunities to exist, there needs to be a systematic shift in educational systems and training for teachers in SEL, as it can be difficult to teach abstract concepts such as empathy in a traditional classroom setting.

One challenge is convincing decision-makers of the effectiveness of adopting an SEL framework and finding ways to implement appropriate changes. As one participant said, “The importance of indicators in facilitating programs and making them happen is that governments and donors don’t consider an outcome of a skills program if there is no job, though there are good outcomes such as social cohesion and less extremism in a community.”

Over the next few days, participants will continue to look at strategies to overcome these challenges and others.
The Goal of Creating Opportunity Through Education

Program co-chair Michael Nettles shares reflections with participants ahead of latest program

Michael Nettles

Good afternoon! And welcome to “Education and Workforce Opportunities for Refugees and Migrants.” My name is Michael Nettles, and I am the Senior Vice President for the Policy Evaluation and Research Center at Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey. ETS, as we are known.

For the next five days, I am also your seminar co-host, along with my friends and colleagues Barbara Holzapfel of Microsoft and Maggie Mitchell Salem of the Qatar Foundation International in Washington, D.C.

For my ETS colleague Catherine Millett and I, today marks the start of our 13th Salzburg Global Seminar in the Education for Tomorrow’s World program. In our decade-long partnership, ETS and [Salzburg Global] have collaborated with researchers, educators, policymakers, scholars, writers, and thought leaders from around the world and across disciplines on something we all care deeply about: creating opportunity through education.

That goal is important to ETS, whose mission is to advance quality and equity in education for learners worldwide regardless of their wealth, their power, their background, or their circumstances. And it is important to me personally. As I am sure is the case with everyone else here, my life has been shaped by education. I shudder to think where I might be but for my learning.

And so I would like to say “Thank you” to our friends at [Salzburg Global], particularly Vice President and Chief Program Officer Clare Shine, Program Director Dominic Regester, and Program Manager Faye Hobson. Clare, Dominic, and Faye have been indefatigable and resourceful in ensuring the success and usefulness of our seminars.

Effective, Affordable, and Transportable

In the spring of last year, I delivered some remarks at Central European University in Budapest on the paucity of educational opportunities available to refugees, migrants, and asylum seekers. I noted that throughout the world, public opinion had turned dangerously hostile to these most vulnerable individuals.

In my own country, the federal government plans to collect the DNA of the hundreds of thousands of people held in immigration detention sites and enter the results into criminal databases. The presumption is that immigrants are criminals. Given that one in every 30 persons on the planet is living outside of their country of birth, that is a lot of criminals, whereas the truth is that many are educated, highly skilled professionals; parents who love their children and want better lives for them; and boys and girls and others with unlimited potential.

I would like to say that in the 20 months since I spoke in Budapest, public opinion has reversed and is now firmly on the side of immigrants and refugees. I would also like to say that I won a million dollars in the lottery last week, but that would not be true, either.

In fact, very little has changed. Armed conflict still punishes those who are least able to protect themselves, and the powerful still harass and vilify the meek. As our seminar program indicates, there are more forcibly displaced people in the world now than at any time since the end of the Second World War.

It is a tragedy. The world’s failure to live up to its own international conventions on the treatment of immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers is an epic waste of human potential. It shortchanges both immigrant and host community, and it risks creating a new generation of the under-educated, the under-skilled, and the stateless. And that is a bill that always comes due.

So it is a good thing that we are all here for the next few days to figure it all out! Short of that, we can examine these issues and consider solutions that are effective, affordable, and transportable.

We know where to start: education.

Acculturation Through Education

Children constitute a third of the world’s population, but they are dramatically overrepresented in the global refugee population. According to research by UNICEF, more than half of all refugees in the world are children.*

We know from research and experience that education, in combination with other resources and services, can help young immigrants integrate into their new communities, and prepare them to take productive places in the labor market and in the larger society.

I focus on young immigrants because of their singular vulnerability and, of course, because they are literally the future. In host countries with aging
populations and declining birth rates, they are also the future labor force.

Education and training systems are the primary way for young immigrants to acquire the language and workplace skills and the cultural knowledge necessary for well-being and success.

Effective acculturation is also important to their native-born peers. School is where native and immigrant students encounter one another most frequently, and where native students are likely to form long-lasting opinions about immigrants and foreign cultures.

To succeed, integration requires educators to understand the striking heterogeneity of immigrant populations, including their geographic, racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and academic diversity. They are also diverse in their reasons for leaving their home countries, and with whom, if anyone, they immigrated with.

Prompt and effective language support is also critical. Data from the Programme for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies, or PIAAC, which ETS contributes to designing for the OECD, illustrates the point. The data shows that foreign-born individuals whose native language is different from the language of the test underperform on literacy and numeracy and have poorer labor market outcomes than students whose native language matches the language of the test.

Social and Emotional Learning

There are some 50 million child immigrants in the world. More than half of them — some 28 million children — were uprooted by conflict. Some unknown number of these carry physical or emotional trauma as a result of their experiences.

One study, of 166 unaccompanied refugee children and adolescents in Belgium, found that 37 percent to 47 percent showed severe or very severe symptoms of anxiety, depression and PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder), according to a UNESCO report published earlier this year.

Think about it: We know that a child who doesn’t get enough sleep or a good breakfast probably won’t perform his or her best in school that day. So what can we expect of a child whose family escaped home in the middle of the night under gunfire and explosions? Or who had directly witnessed violence inflicted on a parent or a sibling? Or who has spent years in a hillside refugee camp without ever having enough to eat or enough to do?

For young students whose brains are still developing, the impact of trauma is bound to be formative and lifelong. And it can affect learning and behavior. And teachers and school leaders need to know how to recognize and address these issues.

Social and Emotional Learning, or SEL, is one approach. SEL was not developed with traumatized refugee students in mind. But around the world, it is being deployed in schools with concentrations of such students.

SEL was the theme of our seminar here last year and of earlier meetings in Jordan, Santiago, and at ETS in Princeton. Definitions vary from culture to culture, but SEL generally refers to noncognitive skills, life skills, soft skills, or personality traits. They are reflected in Sustainable Development Goal Number Four, which promotes gender equality, peace and nonviolence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity.

It is a testament to our seminars on Social and Emotional Learning that our work helped inspire the founding of Karanga, a global alliance that works to inspire and equip practitioners, policymakers and researchers throughout the world to promote quality and equitable Social Emotional Learning and Life Skills. “Karanga” is a Maori term for “welcoming,” with roots and cultural relevance in India, Zimbabwe, and elsewhere.

Assessment

Assessment is a key to effective integration as well. The PISA and PIAAC international assessments of skills and knowledge in OECD countries have proved invaluable for generating data to help nations improve their education systems in general and with different populations of students within and across nations in particular, including first- and second-generation immigrants.

But as the refugee crisis shows, and as Social and Emotional Learning becomes more widely used, new
measures are needed to answer core questions:
• Are teachers getting the necessary training to support their immigrant students?
• What constitutes appropriate training?
• How effective are school-based, psychosocial programs?
• How can assessments account for students’ linguistic and cultural diversity and still generate meaningful data on student learning and performance?
• Given the importance of soft skills, how can they be measured reliably?

ETS is working with the OECD on its research into social and emotional skills. Among the purposes of the study is to demonstrate that tests can produce valid, reliable, comparable information on social and emotional skills across diverse populations and settings. Our other SEL work includes:
• examining SEL measures for the United States Department of Education’s National Assessment of Educational Progress, known as NAEP
• another initiative with NAEP focuses on collaborative problem solving
• designing a survey of teachers, school leaders and administrators on the value of noncognitive assessments
• and integrating soft skills into our data analyses and publications

Whether they measure cognitive or noncognitive skills or traits, assessments should do two things: They should provide opportunity for all learners to demonstrate what they know and can do, and they should help learners connect to learning and development opportunities.

Tests should open doors, not close them.

A Note on Inclusion

Creating education and workplace opportunities for immigrants and refugees is not optional. Millions of individual human lives are at stake, among both immigrants and host communities, along with social and political stability in countries throughout the world. And we cannot turn our backs on them.

And if we are serious — truly serious — about making a difference, then we need to broaden our focus.

Substantially. If PISA and PIAAC are the most sophisticated, the most valid, objective and reliable, and the most useful international measures of skills and knowledge of the populations they assess, then people from so much of the world who remain outside of their orbit need to be included: Africa in both PISA and PIAAC, and in the case of PIAAC, Asia and South America — the very places from which so many of the world’s immigrants, migrants and refugees originate, and where so many are exiled through internal displacement.

We cannot presume to be serious about our task if we consign to invisibility the skills, knowledge, and human potential of half of the world’s current population and the majority of its future population.

We must be more inclusive.

Conclusion

These are all difficult issues, and they are fraught with the polarizing influences of politics, cultural bias, and economic insecurity. The problems are complex, and the solutions are not always evident. But diversity is a source of creativity and renewal, and it argues for a welcoming attitude toward immigrants, especially in schools.

As we embark on our second decade of assembling the best minds in the world to meet, examine, and conceptualize without prejudice or precondition, I can only be energized and optimistic.

I am especially encouraged by the caliber of people who have made a commitment to this cause. You have traveled far from home to shut yourselves away in unfamiliar, albeit delightful surroundings, for the single purpose of improving the education, opportunities, and life outcomes of people you have never and probably will never meet. I am inspired by your example, and I look forward to discussing your ideas and putting them into action. Thank you.

“References are available upon request and will be included in the online version of this article on salzburgglobal.org

#FacesOfLeadership

“I’m doing work around generating evidence for... the skills that youth need to succeed in work and life today. So these are the skills that would help youth to access, retain, and create jobs, but also lead fulfilled lives... I am generating evidence on this and also engaging [the] government to look for opportunities to especially integrate [these kinds] of skills into the curricula for technical and vocational training and education. Some of the skills that are emerging as critical are the skills for self [so] that youth can be more aware about themselves. They can know about how to deal with themselves. They can identify potentials within themselves and how to exploit them. But also skills for employment, employability skills, things like communication, interpersonal skills, collaboration skills, problem-solving. And also skills for society, that resilience and the empathy to do something good for your community and to sustain the planet. I come from a little village in Kenya, and I went through rural schools with a lot of difficulties and succeeding. And now [I am] in a position of power where I can reach out to people who make a difference... [in] how to improve the education system so that it serves more children and especially children who are mostly excluded in our society...”

John Mugo,
Executive director of the Zizi Afrique Foundation and program director of Ujana 360
Healthy Societies: Opportunity, Resilience, and Empathy

The second day of the Salzburg Global program, *Education and Workforce Opportunities for Refugees and Migrants*, began with a panel on “Healthy Societies, Opportunity, Resilience, and Empathy,” where participants discussed topics from language policy to apartheid in South Africa.

A healthy society was described as one where families don’t have to choose between eating and sending a child to school. However, there are many hurdles to overcome, such as finding a safe way to get to school. There is also the burden of emphasizing the importance of education, a challenge mentioned by one participant who works with refugees in their home country. Refugees come to the country as workers, and many are not interested in education. In addition, they may not integrate with other children, leading them to become more isolated. There is a need for immediate solutions, as well as long-term infrastructure, participants heard.

The idea of building systems was mentioned where systems include everyone. One participant described how parents and grandparents walked their children to a school in Uganda, where they were then able to sit in on the literacy classes. The parents became interested in reading and writing with their kids, an interest that later led them to set up literacy classes in their home village.

Echoing an idea from the previous night’s panel, one participant brought up the importance of remembering that communities bring knowledge and knowledge systems with them, and failure to acknowledge this pre-existing knowledge can invalidate the refugee experience.

Many participants agreed that while the concepts of a healthy society, opportunity, resilience, and empathy are open to interpretation, they are a crucial part of ensuring that refugees and migrants can benefit from education systems, and integrate into society.

Safe Societies: Education as a Preventative Intervention

“Unless the entire ecosystem is involved, it won’t work, whether its top-down or bottom-up.” That’s how one participant summarized the debates and discussion in Salzburg on education as a preventative intervention.

The overall argument focused on if we increase educational opportunities, there is a smaller chance of people resorting to violent measures as a means to create change in their societies. However, there are many existing challenges limiting the impact of education in areas experiencing conflict or places where a mixed classroom of host country students and refugees are common. These barriers include street-level bureaucrats, outdated textbooks, indicators for donors, and strict timeframes.

Education, in some places, can “be about everything but the child,” as one participant said, and for prevention to happen, the focus needs to shift.

It’s not all on the teachers, though, when it comes to prevention. Education cannot prevent atrocities alone and need the support of donors, the government, and local programs. Another point is that education can sometimes be a risk factor, something that could be a problem instead of a solution for preventative intervention. Education, for all the good it has the potential to create, can also oppress or alienate students, creating more vulnerable communities.

To eliminate that risk, change-makers can focus on changing narratives in textbooks and build up peace education in their curriculums so that it is seen as critical and not just a luxury elective. To make programs long-lasting, there is a need to involve the local community more in day-to-day work. This could occur through the use of co-ownership models.
Empowering Educators and Students Through Tech

Barbara Holzapfel discusses technology’s role in providing new educational opportunities

Claire Kidwell

“We want to empower every student on the planet to achieve more,” This is the mission behind education at Microsoft, according to Barbara Holzapfel, general manager for education marketing.

Holzapfel is being interviewed while attending Salzburg Global’s latest program in its Education for Tomorrow’s World multi-year series: Education and Workforce Opportunities for Refugees and Migrants. It’s the second time she’s attended a program at Salzburg Global and the second time she’s been co-chair.

Her focus and the focus of the ongoing program revolves around key ideas such as technology and social and emotional learning (SEL), and the impact these capabilities have on refugee and migrant education. While more industries call for soft skills, such as team building or leadership, educational systems are slow to adopt SEL frameworks.

“Here is a huge supply and demand discrepancy where if you actually talk to students, they do want to learn these things like creativity, communication, collaboration, all of those kinds of things,” says Holzapfel.

“At the same time, school systems and teachers don’t feel equipped to actually teach that. And so there is a massive tension there between what’s going to be needed and what’s currently being supplied.”

Holzapfel and her team are looking at the current first graders who will graduate in 2030, and the skills that could be in demand for the jobs required in a decade. This includes refugee and migrant children, and for them, Holzapfel asks, “How do we keep them in the learning journey at the most basic level? And how do we make sure that we are connecting them to learning and education opportunities?”

According to her, this is where technology can play a transformative role for the better. Tools like Skype and Teams can connect refugee and migrant students to resources or teachers across the globe.

Holzapfel says, “I was particularly struck by the intersection with language and linguistics and this where, you know, if you just imagine yourself, you’re a refugee child and you end up in a country where you do not speak the language. Not only have you just gone through massive trauma in your life, then you find yourself in a new country which is economically and politically more stable, but you might not speak the language at all. And so that then becomes the question of what can we do to help?”

Technology can facilitate this language education. At Microsoft, Holzapfel says Microsoft is working on translators for PowerPoint and other tools to help students.

With some of these SEL skills such as creativity, Holzapfel suggests, “This is nothing we have to teach them.” Students are naturally curious, she says, and naturally want to learn, something she finds very inspiring. In situations where displacement has occurred, she wants to provide the tools to enhance the “innate thirst for learning” that children have. She says, “It’s a matter of how can we get these tools to them to keep fostering their creativity.”

Returning to the topic of Salzburg, Holzapfel is excited by the work taking place, through ongoing initiatives, multidisciplinary dialogue, and “the level and depth of thinking and the expertise of the people who come together - their sheer passion to make an impact.”

Holzapfel hopes for more forums like this to come together, and create initiatives such as Karanga, an alliance established at a previous Salzburg Global education program. Holzapfel serves on the Karanga steering committee along with several Salzburg Global Fellows.

Holzapfel says, “I hugely appreciate that everybody takes that time out of their busy lives to come together and have those discussions. The fact that we’re also moving towards actionable outcomes, as evidenced by the Karanga initiative that takes the conversations from here from this week to another level and keeps it moving forward.”

Did you know?

• Microsoft Education has an Educator Newsletter which shares events, quick tips, and easy to use resources about new Microsoft Education tools. Connect at https://education.microsoft.com/Start/UserCommunicationPreference
Brick by Brick: Recognizing the Value of Learning While Playing

“This is the real secret of life - to be completely engaged with what you are doing in the here and now. And instead of calling it work, realize it is play,” said Alan Watts, the British philosopher. Participants were reminded of this quote following the end of a session which involved building ducks, creating thunderstorms, and taking part in magic tricks.

When we talk about play, we talk about learning. Playing can enable us to explore, practice, make mistakes, and try again. Through play, we develop physical, social, cognitive, creative, and emotional skills. There are five characteristics we can also bear in mind when we think of play. It involves doing something joyful, meaningful, iterative, socially interactive, and actively engaging. Participants were reminded of this fact when they had to create a duck out of six LEGO pieces in 60 seconds. In spite of everyone having the same constraints and tools, the brace of ducks on show revealed each participant could still add their own creative flair to their final design.

The session’s interactive theme continued when participants became a temporary orchestra, creating the sound of a thunderstorm using their hands. The activity showed how a group of individuals could become one and perform in unison. Children can be given tools and practices that promote self-confidence, resilience, and self-sufficiency. There are a variety of learning methods, and early childhood development goes hand in hand with play.

As the session came to a close, several participants were able to take part in a number of magic tricks and learn more about what it means to be a humanitarian magician. The magic brings joy to many, but it is more than entertainment, participants heard. There are also emotional, cognitive, and social benefits, and children are educated while having fun.

Supporting Multilingualism and Language Rights Globally

Following the end of the Salzburg Global program, Springboard for Talent: Language Learning and Integration in a Globalized World, in December 2017, participants came together to call for policies that value and uphold multilingualism and language rights.

This call to action, which later became the Salzburg Statement for a Multilingual World, was published on International Mother Language Day the following year. This statement is now available in more than 50 languages.

Since its publication, the statement has been presented to Uganda’s Minister of Education; shared by the UK All Party Parliamentary Working Group on Languages; and has become part of the University of Cardiff’s online open course on “Working with Translation.”

More recently, the statement was included in the forthcoming UNICEF/UNESCO publication, Approaches to Language in Education for Migrants and Refugees in the Asia-Pacific Region, which has been authored by Kathleen Heugh. Coleman and Heugh are both Salzburg Global Fellows.

Dominic Regester, program director at Salzburg Global responsible for programs on education, sustainability, and innovation, said, “It is really great to see how, two years on, the statement continues to be used as an advocacy tool for multilingualism and language rights around the world.”

This week, Salzburg Global welcomes back several Fellows from the December 2017 program. Regester said, “[This program] brings together the two key strands of our collective work over the last two years around multilingualism and social and emotional learning to look at how better education and workforce opportunities for refugees and migrants can be achieved.”
Hot Topic:
“How Important is Language of Instruction in the Context of Refugee and Migrant Education?”

Mira Merchant and Oscar Tollast
“The language of instruction is, I would say, absolutely crucial. Not only to their educational success. Clearly, they need to understand what’s happening in the classroom in order to be able to speak to there partner, speak to the rest of the group, understand the textbooks, understand the teacher, learn new concepts. But I think it’s also important from a social and emotional aspect simply because without feeling as though your language is valued, you can’t then necessarily develop the kinds of relationships that help you fit into a new environment.”

Tony Capstick,
Lecturer in TESOL and applied linguistics at the University of Reading

“In Lebanon, the problem between the language and Syrian refugees is that in the Syrian curriculum, everything is taught in Arabic. In Lebanon, these are taught in English or in French. So this puts a very big language barrier to the students. So whenever you go to a certain classroom, and you have a teacher trying to teach all of these material[s], language puts a very big stop to whatever they doing. And they try to manage speaking in Arabic at the same time as English and French. But it makes things a bit trickier for the students, for them to adapt to the culture and the host country there. And so language of instruction is super important.”

Andrea Fahed
Education coordinator at Lebanese Alternative Learning

“Language can be really an opportunity as well as a tool [for] … exclusivity. So I do think that language instruction should be the native language of the communities…. In this way, we can have really an inclusive education where everyone can completely understand. But of course, we recognize the importance of the main languages like English and French. But those should be a plus, and not substitute [for] the native language.”

Carmela Francolino
Conversation partner, talent and community manager at NaTakallam

“It is fundamentally important. The issue is that unless students and schools can understand the contents of their educational experience, they do not learn anything. It is particularly important for… students from minority backgrounds because they feel very afraid when they go to school. They feel as if they are going to be discriminated against. And they feel very much as if what they bring to the school is not valued. Well, students who come from refugee backgrounds, they come from backgrounds of trauma and are so, so demoralized by the time they get to school that it is usually more difficult for them to be able to understand the content of their instruction. So it’s absolutely critical that they are taught in a language that they understand…”

Kathleen Heugh,
Associate professor of applied linguistics, University of South Australia

“I think it’s very vital, partly because it’s so often neglected. Two weeks ago, I just happened to sit next to the director of a major European aid agency that was doing a whole lot of education things in a large refugee camp in Asia, and he was describing all these activities. I asked him, ‘Well, what language is this being delivered in?’ And he said, ‘I don’t know. I’ve never really thought about asking that question.’ And so I think the language of instruction used in refugee programs can really impact the success of the program, as well as helping to alleviate some of the trauma that the children have experienced.”

Kirk Person,
Director, external affairs, SIL International

“… exclusivity. So I do think that language instruction should be the native language of the communities… In this way, we can have really an inclusive education where everyone can completely understand. But of course, we recognize the importance of the main languages like English and French. But those should be a plus, and not substitute [for] the native language.”

Caroline Pontefract,
Director of education, UNRWA

“What inspires me to do my work… it’s working at so many levels… It really is about children, and it’s about 530,000 children and any school, in every classroom we go into, they are really lovely children… It’s about making the system around it work to support the children… I’ve always believed very much in a systemic approach in order to change classroom practice… It’s no good just training the teacher in isolation. It is no good just training a school principal or encouraging a parent to be involved or training education support cadre. You’ve got to have the policies in place. You’ve got to know what you’re trying to achieve and why, and then you’ve got to have this strategy in terms of how, and then you can build capacity. So then you build capacity when you’ve got a clear goal and a clear vision and you build capacity at all the levels… I think that’s what inspires me about my work, is that opportunity to get the system that we have in UNRWA and shake it because it needed a shake… To change the classroom, everything around it has got to be saying the same thing and working together… [The] wonderful opportunity I have as a director of education in UNRWA is to work across the systems as well and across five fields of operation. So that’s what inspires me, those children. But knowing that it’s not just about something at that level. It’s about a whole system.”