The teaching of social and emotional learning (SEL) should be seen as a “vaccination,” declared one Fellow as the sixth Salzburg Global Seminar program on SEL opened on March 10.

But a vaccination against what? Many countries’ education systems focus on producing future workers, and while “soft skills” including communication, collaboration; and critical thinking have all been highlighted as vital in the “Fourth Industrial Revolution” workplace, SEL can teach so much more: SEL can help produce better future citizens.

Besides teaching children “traditional” skills, as educators, it is also “our responsibility to make sure children do not grow up to be racists, rapists, suicidal or violent,” and this is where the teaching of SEL comes in, with students learning such skills and values as empathy, respect; and resilience.

But how and when should SEL be taught? Many teachers are worried about being overburdened by the introduction of new subjects, especially if accompanied by new testing and assessments. However, rather than being introduced as a standalone course, panelists in Salzburg recommended that SEL is integrated into other subject areas, including STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math), advocating for a “transdisciplinary” rather than simply multi- or interdisciplinary approach.

As well as being integrated into the curriculum, SEL should be offered at all school levels, starting as early as possible. While the human capacity for learning continues throughout life, moral development starts from age three, making pre-school a vital time for SEL.

Teaching of SEL does not belong only in the formal classroom. Children can learn much from their peers, communities, and families – and can teach others, including parents, as well as learn from them.

As well as aiding individuals’ and societies’ positive development, SEL can also help countries meet the Sustainable Development Goals, especially SDG4 (quality education) SDG5 (gender equality), SDG8 (decent work), SDG10 (reducing inequality), SDG16 (peace and justice) and SDG17 (partnership for the goals).

The five-day program, Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action, is being held by Salzburg Global Seminar in partnership with ETS, Microsoft and Qatar Foundation International, together with Porticus, the USAID’s Education in Crisis and Conflict Network and the British Council. The 50 participants, including representatives of Ministries of Education, experts in education in crisis and conflict contexts and researchers, academics and practitioners, will tackle core topics in the development of SEL curricula, training, and assessment.
Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action
Newsletter – Session 633 – Issue 1

Monday, March 10, 2019

Catherine Millett: The Impact of Climate Change and Mass Migration on Education “is Already Severe and Will Only Intensify”

Session Co-Chair offers her opening remarks on SEL in times of conflict and crisis

Good afternoon! And welcome to Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action.

My name is Catherine Millett, and I am a Senior Research Scientist in the Policy Evaluation & Research Center at Educational Testing Service of Princeton, New Jersey, in the United States.

My colleague Michael Nettles usually gives the opening remarks, but he will not join us until Wednesday. Tomorrow evening, Michael is receiving the John Hope Franklin award in recognition of his lifetime of work to improve the plight of African American people in education.

Thank you all for going out of your way to collaborate with us on this critically important work.

Thank you especially to the other co-chairs: Carine Allaf, the Senior Programs Advisor of the Qatar Foundation International; Cornelia Janke, Director of USAID’s Education in Crisis and Conflict Network; and Mark Sparvell, Thought Leader for Education Marketing, Microsoft Education. And to Clare Shine, Dominic Regester and the other members of Salzburg Global Seminar. Our nine-year collaboration is going strong!

This is the sixth SEL seminar that we have convened in partnership with Salzburg Global Seminar. The first was here in Salzburg in December 2016; followed by Santiago in November 2017, the Dead Sea in Jordan in February 2018; ETS in Princeton in June 2018; and back here again last December.

In May of 2016, Clare, Michael and I did not originally plan on holding so many SEL seminars. That we have is a measure of the tremendous global interest in the topic. At the end of this week, Dominic, Faye and I estimate that 264 people representing 197 organizations from 57 countries will have discussed the importance of traits variously referred to as social and emotional skills, soft skills, 21st-century skills, noncognitive skills, and personality traits.

Clearly, there is something about Social and Emotional Learning that resonates powerfully among educators, researchers, and policymakers throughout the world. That “something,” we all seem to agree, is that social and emotional skills are foundational to individual, and thus community and global, well-being.

SEL has arrived! And so have you! And on behalf of ETS, I thank you for your interest.

A Shift in Focus

We designed our previous seminars to be opportunities to learn from one another about how SEL is understood, applied and used in different countries, cultures, and classrooms. As we met and talked, the world marched on. And not always in positive directions for education or for global peace, or even global survival.

Then and now, three perils in particular pose grave and urgent challenges: forced mass migration; catastrophic climate change; and the political challenges they reflect and provoke, including violent conflict.

Climate change, mass migration, and political conflict have tumultuous and destructive effects on access to education and intellectual development. And those effects are likely to grow worse.

And so we thought we should widen the focus for this seminar. So in addition to examining how to deliver SEL in conventional classroom settings, we will discuss how to teach and measure soft skills in the wake of natural disasters and among refugee populations.

Climate Change

This is an education seminar, not a climate-change symposium. But it’s important to create a context for our discussions. So here is a brief overview of the climate situation.

According to the 2018 National Climate Assessment conducted by the U.S. Global Change Research Program, Earth’s climate is changing faster than at any time in the history of modern civilization. Climate change is already causing more extreme and frequent rainfall, floods, droughts and wildfires, and damaging infrastructure, ecosystems, and social systems along the way.

In a widely read article that he expanded into a book that was published last month, the journalist David Wallace-Wells reported the dire findings of climate scientists. Based on current trends, rising temperatures, desertification and coastal flooding will make much of the world uninhabitable or close to it by the end of this century. In one pungent passage, Wallace-Wells refers to the “Bahrain-ing of New York,” in which New York City becomes as hot as Bahrain, one of the hottest places in the world today.

As with every disaster, low-income and marginalized populations are likely to suffer the most given that they have the least in resources and ability to prepare for and respond to extreme weather.

Nor do they fare as well in the recovery process. In the United States, a recent public radio investigation showed that white and wealthier Americans often receive more financial support from the federal government than their less well-off neighbors. As the report put it, after a disaster, the rich get richer, the poor get poorer, and the gap between rich and poor widens.

Refugees and Migration

As for mass migration and education, the impacts of climate change couldn’t come at a worse time.

Mass migration is already at crisis levels. The United Nations Refugee Agency reported that at the end of 2016, there were close to 66 million people...
throughout the world who had been forcibly displaced from their homes because of persecution, conflict, violence or human rights violations.

It was the highest total since the end of World War II. For a point of reference, this number approximates the populations of France (66,859,768) or the United Kingdom (65,595,565) in 2016.

Not surprisingly, the countries that produced the greatest numbers of forcibly displaced people were those riven by conflict, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, South Sudan, and Syria.

- About 22.5 million of the total were refugees driven abroad, just over half of whom were children under age 18.
- Globally, there were 6.4 million school-age refugees under the mandate of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) at the end of 2016. More than half of them did not attend a single day of school throughout the year.
- As for higher education, the UN reports that tertiary enrollment among refugees is “stuck” at 1% despite improvements due to expanded scholarships and other support programs.

SEL Assessment and ETS

Regardless of the setting, measuring such soft skills as tolerance and collaboration is much more complex than measuring math or reading skills. And while full-scale SEL classroom programs are proliferating, they can be expensive and require hundreds of hours of teacher training.

So it is good news that so many of our colleagues are working to provide educators with inexpensive, high-quality learning tools that they can use quickly and easily in emergency education situations.

It is such a challenging context. Just locating the educators in a refugee setting, let alone organizing and leveraging their expertise, can be a monumental task, as is organizing the students.

And that’s in the best case. There are no guarantees that every group of climate or conflict-displaced refugees will include a roster of experienced, professionally trained educators. In December Rena Deitz with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) shared with us that sometimes the assignment to teach falls to the oldest student, who can be a 15- or 16-year-old kid suffering his or her own trauma, and who like most kids needs the familiarity of the school routine to feel secure in a profoundly insecure environment.

You can see why the teaching tools need to be user-friendly, and readily available.

What today we call Social and Emotional Learning, soft skills or noncognitive skills has been a long-standing concern of my organization, ETS.

Henry Chauncey, the founder and first president of ETS, pondered the importance of soft skills in 1949, two years after ETS’s founding. In his handwritten notebooks that Michael and I examined in the ETS archives in preparation for the June meeting, he commented on what he called the “non-intellectual factors which affect success or failure.”

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

So this is an area that we have been involved in for a very long time. Among our activities, we are:

- working with the OECD on its Study on Social and Emotional Skills;
- examining SEL measures for the US Department of Education’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP);
- integrating into our data analyses and publications such effective measures as communication skills, achievement motivation, intellectual engagement, sociability, working independently, time management, leadership, and risk-taking;
- and advising the Assessment Work Group of the Chicago-based Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, or CASEL.

Conclusion

Separately and in combination, climate change, mass migration, and violent conflict pose incredibly complex challenges to educators. Floods and fires rarely announce themselves in advance, and so there is rarely time to prepare for the consequences.

But these forces are not looming. They are happening. Their impact on education is already severe and will only intensify.

Based on David Wallace-Wells’s reporting, for every half-degree of warming, societies will see between a 10 and 20 percent increase in the likelihood of armed conflict due to resource competition and forced migration. Various estimates place the number of climate refugees anywhere between 100 million and 1 billion by 2050. But the fact is that there is a certain climate refugee” is itself a warning.

As educators, researchers and policymakers, our responsibility is to figure out what and how:

- What will we need to do to ensure that students will have access to quality educational resources regardless of their circumstances and conditions?
- And how do we get ready today for what we know will be coming tomorrow?

If Social and Emotional Learning is as powerful and important as we say, then we better figure it out quickly. Thank you very much. And I look forward to working with you over the next few days.

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**Partners’ hopes for the week ahead**

This week’s program is supported by ETS, Microsoft, the Qatar Foundation International and USAID’s Education in Crisis and Conflict Network. “What I’m hoping this week to do is to seek to understand. To understand the perspectives from colleagues from other countries, other contexts. To better understand their challenges and their opportunities. I’m also hoping to be able to raise awareness around the free research and resources that will help them in that work.”

Mark Sparvell
Thought Leader for Education, Microsoft, USA

“Thank you very much. And I look forward to working with you over the next few days.”

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

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“…and our partnerships are very important to us.”

Carine Allaf
Senior Programs Advisor, Qatar Foundation International (QFI), USA
**HOT TOPIC:**
How Do We Convince the Unconvinced of SEL?

Lucy Browett

“In the context of my experience, I have never yet come across anyone who is truly unconvinced. The closest I’ve come to seeing people who are unconvinced are those who say, “Ah, but what about when the kids go home and see their parents behaving badly? Doesn’t that negate the learning?” The answer is no, it absolutely doesn’t... One can quote science at those who are unconvinced on that level to say it’s a matter of physical brain architecture.”

Leslee Udwin
Founder and President, Think Equal, UK

“This idea of recognizing that social emotional learning is not something that we teach in isolation. That we have to figure out ways to integrate social emotional learning into the curriculum, that we would see in standard educational systems. That science and reading and math have to be integrated with social emotional learning as well as civic engagement.”

Carol O’Donnell
Executive Director, Smithsonian Science Education, Smithsonian Institution, USA

“I’m not always approached by people who are unconvinced. But in saying that, most frequently, people are interested in data and research... What I have found is that, when we collect the student voice or the voice of a community that talks about what they really want for their children and how they really want society to be in the future, things like SEL become really prevalent.”

Pauline Cleaver
Associate Deputy Secretary, Early Learning and Student Achievement, Ministry of Education, New Zealand

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

Developing a sense of identity is an important part of growing up – and continues long beyond childhood.

As the world becomes increasingly connected and globalized, with mass movements of people across countries and continents, how the next generation develop their sense of personal, societal and national identity, empathy, respect for others, resilience in adverse situations, and willingness and ability to communicate and collaborate with others, will greatly impact the shape and cohesion of future workplaces and indeed societies-at-large.

As one panelist urged: “Follow the SEL breadcrumbs.” The jobs of the future will require good collaborators. Collaboration needs self-regulation. Self-regulation needs self-awareness. Self-awareness needs emotional understanding and vocabulary. Thus, “emotional intelligence is key to success.”

Our societies are becoming more diverse. Academic subjects such as history and literature can be exclusionary for those who do not belong to the majority population. SEL can help foster the critical thinking of those who belong to the social majority in order to question the narratives they are being presented with. It can also help those outside of that majority to process and address the emotions of being excluded. SEL can help all students to better process, understand and empathize when learning about traumatic historical events in both shared and other communities’ histories.

The digital space is formative in shaping youth identity. “Generation Z is leaving our classrooms and entering our staffrooms,” while Generation Alpha are now starting school. They are the first “phygital” generation – drawing no distinction between the physical and digital world.

Online spaces give people the chance to find and “try on” new identities, seeking out communities of like-minded other people not present IRL. (in real life). Many young people thus now have multiple identities. Ensuring our young people have the emotional intelligence and positive values to successfully and safely navigate both these IRL and online spaces is key.

Smashing the Patriarchy with SEL

Education is a powerful tool in achieving social justice – but that education needs to be about more than just academic achievement. Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) is also vital.

For children in non-crisis settings, research shows that those who struggle the most with their behavior benefit the most from SEL teaching, as reflected in their academic outcomes. Thus SEL is a pathway to academic equity.

For children in conflict and crisis settings, SEL can be even more important. “It doesn’t matter if you have these skills and competencies if you are not safe enough to use them.”

In April 2014, 276 school girls were kidnapped by the terrorist group, Boko Haram, from their school in Chibok, northern Nigeria. Some were fortunate enough to escape or be released in the following months – but unsurprisingly, they were traumatized. Getting these girls back into school was a priority for local educators. First 24, now 122 girls have been enrolled into a new program called the New Foundation School. The program is a college-preparation course to ready the girls for study at the American University of Nigeria. But, as a panelist in Salzburg pointed out: “This wasn’t just an academic matter...we had to address their trauma,” and this is where SEL comes in.

The New Foundation School supports not only the girls’ academic growth, but also addresses their social and emotional wellbeing and physical health, post trauma. Through various academic and artistic pursuits, the Chibok girls are learning to deal with their traumatic experience, regulate their emotions, and express their hopes for their future. The school’s program does not disregard their traditional culture, but through education many of the girls have come to question traditional societal expectations of them. Many now want to return to their communities to address inequalities and issues there.

In India, SEL is being used to help girls – and boys – develop a greater sense of gender equality through the development of empathy, respect and resilience. Girls are empowered to understand their self-worth and create a strong sense of self – not just as someone’s daughter, wife or mother. Boys learn that girls are their equals.

Class and caste issues are also being addressed. As one participant remarked: “It’s not only important for the dalit girl to learn about her value but also for the brahmin girl to know it too.”

Thus SEL is being used to help deconstruct oppressive power dynamics, such as patriarchy. When deconstructing patriarchy, one panelist pointed out, it is important to engage young men. “We tell them patriarchy isn’t your fault but it hurts the women you love.”

While it is important to expand SEL beyond the classroom and into the home and communities, “schools are powerful sites of social transformation... If schools are unjust, injustice will persist outside of schools.” The reverse can also be true.
Mapping Out SEL and Facilitating Conversations at Salzburg Global Seminar

Monika Kochowicz discusses her work and the conversations she has had in Salzburg

Lucy Browett

After three days of productive talks at the Salzburg Global Seminar program, Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action, participants have had the opportunity to share knowledge and expertise and learn about different countries’ approaches to social and emotional learning (SEL). Now is the time to discuss next steps.

During their first three days at Schloss Leopoldskron, participants have engaged in panel discussions, knowledge exchanges, and even a film screening to explore SEL in both research and practice contexts, as well as from global and local perspectives.

Participants range from academics and researchers to policymakers and educators, providing a breadth of knowledge and experience in varying forms and contexts of SEL.

One of the participants embracing the varying formats of the program and the multitude of conversation opportunities is Monika Kochowicz, who collaborates with the Norwegian Red Cross and No Hate Speech campaign as a facilitator and educator, specializing in conflict resolution and non-violent communication.

This affinity towards non-formal learning methodology began through her own studies. She said, “For my thesis, I was looking into Polish migrant youth experiences of intercultural learning and different learning settings.

“Then since, I [have] felt so very passionate about non-formal education, and I thought this is a great way of creating safe spaces for people to learn and reflect.”

Kochowicz took this passion and began her work with the Norwegian Red Cross, where she became a workshop facilitator. For her, the role has strong SEL roots. She said, “I would say that the components that would align with SEL would be to give them [the students with whom she works] tools, learning how to communicate and how to voice their needs and emotions.”

Through this work, her experience with the No Hate Speech campaign, as well as through the Norwegian Red Cross, Kochowicz often works with young refugees.

Kochowicz said, “I also work with human rights education and mainly concentrating on online hate speech. This is again facilitating conversations and group processes with youth between 15 and 25 years old.

“It’s migrant youth... and I feel it’s immensely important for them to just create those safe spaces for them to get to talk about their experience to just give them the feeling that they can be heard and seen.”

On Monday afternoon, participants attended a Knowledge Café, where they spent around 25 minutes at each table discussing, exploring SEL concepts led by a facilitator at each station. “I really like that format because you get to travel,” said Kochowicz. “It was mapping what different people work with.”

“There’s been a few different approaches to applying SEL, different perspectives. Some of which is in conflict areas. People [are] going into those places of trauma and working with people whose needs really have to be taken into consideration before doing any work.... And it sounded like their needs are being taken into account.”

On Wednesday, participants will gather into working groups to further explore the concepts and ideas discussed throughout the week and make action plans.

Kochowicz stated, “I feel like I’ve been learning so much already.”

Looking ahead to these working groups, she added, “I would want to gain more input on how can we work with both the youth practitioners and teachers and youth workers.”

Reflecting on her own experiences that she would be able to bring to the table, Kochowicz said, “I would like to concentrate on all the simplicity of action, which is teaching people how to communicate how to talk about their needs and emotions.”

The conversation continues.

The program Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action is part of Salzburg Global’s long-running multi-year series Education for Tomorrow’s World. The program is held in partnership with ETS, Microsoft, Porticus, Qatar Foundation International and USAID’s Education in Crisis and Conflict Network, with additional support from the British Council.
Being Human in Digital World

“How are you feeling?” asked the moderator. As a large digital clock projected onto the wall counted down on the panelists’ opening remarks, the answer was probably “stressed.”

Technology thus loomed large in a panel exploring the role it plays in helping to develop SEL and the general role it plays in our everyday lives. Tech is a powerful tool, but unlike pre-digital tools like a hammer, which were completely in the control of humans, today’s tools seem to be in control of us. How do we retake our sense of control and retain our sense of humanity?

Digitalization is just one of several “mega trends” facing the next generation. From globalization and environmental insecurity to the fourth industrial revolution and the ensuing need for lifelong learning and collaboration and co-operation, the world of work and at-large will look very different for today’s students. As a UK study showed, many students have career aspirations that do not align with future workforce projections, greater links need to be forged between the world of study and the world of work.

As the first “phygital” (physical-digital) generation, tech is already playing a huge role in young people’s lives. Fears abound, mostly focused on the quantity rather than quality of young people’s interaction with tech.

Excessive screen time has been connected to childhood isolation and obesity. Excessive use of social media can impact self-esteem. Excessive use of tools such as Google Maps can lead to the loss of offline map-reading skills or even spatial awareness. Some even worry that excessive photo-taking is impairing memory retention.

But tech also has the power to enhance our SEL and lives in general. Smartphones can create a closer connection to the wider world, opening up space for dialogue, exchanges and community building never before possible. Virtual reality can help develop students’ empathy, e.g. using it to render familiar environments into war-torn places to help them understand what has caused migrants to flee their homes.

Artificial intelligence (AI) is also increasingly omnipresent, opening up new ethical questions such as “can I be rude to Alexa?” One might be inclined to say no, but as one panelist admitted “I’m happy to shout at Alexa” – alleviating burdens onto virtual assistants can be cathartic.

“Before we ask what is artificial intelligence, we need to ask what is human intelligence,” remarked a panelist. We belittle ourselves when we think that artificial intelligence will replace us. As humans in a digital world, we can still retain control of both our emotions and technological tools.

Context Matters: Assessing SEL

“What’s measured matters” is an oft-used phrase in measurement and assessment, but on a panel on the measurement and assessment of SEL the mantra “context matters” was also frequently stated.

When it comes to assessing SEL, regardless of the context, the biggest challenge is the lack of agreement on what constitutes “social and emotional learning” and the naming of the key competencies.

But beyond terminology, assessment of SEL in crisis and conflict contexts is further hindered by the fact that many of the assessment methods have yet to be validated in those contexts. How do we know that existing methods will work in this context? How can they be adequately adapted?

While much is done to translate programs into local contexts and languages, this is less common for the assessments of those programs. If a child is learning in a language different to that which they use at home, they may not have the vocabulary necessary to express themselves in a self-reporting assessment. One solution is to empower and train local teachers to formulate their own assessments.

Measurement is important for more than just individual assessment; data gathering also helps measure, evaluate and improve SEL programs. This data should then be widely shared to improve other programs.

In countries where testing and assessment is seen as burdensome and stressful for both students and teachers, measurement of SEL can prove controversial. As one panelist remarked, “We don’t teach SEL for the sake of teaching it, to meet assessment goals... We teach SEL to provide the foundation for students’ education” but as another also rightly pointed out, “Without effective assessments, we cannot know if students are succeeding in our programs.” Ensuring that assessment does not become burdensome is key to ensuring widespread data collection.

Individual assessment and program M&E can help gather the data to make the case for SEL education for the unconverted. Measuring SEL can thus make SEL matter more – whatever the context.

Closing the Gaps in Global SEL Research

“The moment of SEL is here” – so how do we take advantage of that to curate the research needed to advance SEL?

Many donors fund programs for offering SEL in crisis and conflict settings, but more need to fund the research needed to make sure these programs are effective in the specific context in which they are being implemented. Zero research means poor impact. As researchers, we should ask ourselves five key questions: What works? For whom does it work? How does it work? Under what conditions does it work? And “for how damn long?”

Understanding the context and resources available will create more effective programs. However, much research takes place outside of the context of practice, thus stronger links need to be forged between the two.

“There are more gaps than there is research,” lamented one panelist. Policymakers are often “pushed to back up what they need to do,” so much so that they tend to sometimes “grab anything.”

Those who suffer most from this poorly informed approach are those who would benefit most greatly were it to be improved: the students. “Kids don’t deserve us guessing – kids deserve us knowing.”

To produce the best possible research and evidence, research should be inclusive. “We need to co-create research with communities so that research is done with them not on them.” Research also needs to expand beyond US/Western scholarship. Funding initiatives to pair researchers from the North and South, can go a long way in establishing a global understanding of SEL.

Screening at the Schloss: Back to the Fatherland

Building on discussions on SEL and identity, Fellows were treated to a screening of the moving documentary Back to the Fatherland. Directors Kat Rohrer and Gil Levanon took questions from the floor, exploring their own journey in making the deeply personal movie and how their own SEL and national narratives had helped or hindered them.

You can find out more about the movie and watch extra footage online: www.backtothefatherland.com

Upcoming screenings include six dates in London next week. If you would like to bring the film to your city, contact Kat: kat@greenkatproductions.com.
HOT TOPIC:
How Can SEL Help Foster Identity?

Lucy Browett

“Identity is such an immense topic and I feel the word itself is loaded... For [migrant youth], it’s a very important tool when they’re migrating from another country and they have to learn the language and values of another country and live by them. It’s important that they see multiple layers of identity that can allow them to relate to others and have sense of belonging. It’s not only their national identity but also other things they hold dear such as different roles in life, personality facets, etc. Mapping and self-awareness can contribute to putting things into perspective and their well-being.”

Monika Kochowicz
Facilitator and Educator, Norwegian Red Cross, Norway

“We all hold many identities simultaneously. Especially for children in crisis and conflict settings, social and emotional learning may offer some of the best opportunities for children to internalize and apply skills, values and behaviors that may be critical to promoting positive identities, which may link to psychosocial wellbeing, resilience and to peace building efforts.”

Lindsay Stark
Associate Professor of Public Health and Social Work, Washington University, USA

“We in our context, after failing the public examination, some students commit suicide. So how do we address these emotional feelings?... [Identity] is basically the issue. When children appear in the public examination, they have hope and inspiration that they will pass. So when they fail they feel humiliation.”

Mahmudul Hoque
Additional Secretary for Development, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh

“With SEL...you have a strong sense of identity, so you feel like you’re more able to do a lot of things. You also feel that you have the ability to succeed because then you know who you are and so that brings out that whole issue of success and being able to manage your life much more effectively.”

Lucy Maina
Program Manager, Zizi Afrique Foundation, Kenya

“SEL skills include self and social awareness. In crisis and conflict contexts, these skills are particularly important for children and young people who need the skills to understand who they are and how to situate themselves in the world, especially as they experience multiple displacements and often are caught up in vulnerable and complex identity politics.”

Margi Bhatt
Coordinator, Education Policy, Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), USA

Have an opinion on our HOT TOPIC? Tweet @SalzburgGlobal with the hashtag #Sgeedu
A Global Alliance for Social Emotional Learning

Salzburg Global Seminar, Fellows and partners launch new global initiative

Lucy Browett

Helen Keller once said: “Ideas without action are worthless.”


The general goal of that program was to explore regional and national initiatives, bringing together practitioners, educators, researchers and policymakers from across the world to discuss concepts and practices in SEL.

However, participants including Louka Parry, director of academy for Education Changemakers in Australia, landed the seeds for a new global organization. This “global alliance” in SEL is yet to be named but was established by a working group at the December program.

Parry, as well as several other Fellows from that initial working group, returned to Salzburg in March 2019 for the program Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action and to take this new initiative further.

Parry said, “Salzburg has, I think, the privilege of bringing together all these fantastic innovators researchers policymakers and practitioners. So what could that look like specifically for SEL at scale?

“That really is, I think, the promise of a global alliance... [It is] an alliance of people that basically helps to curate a community that is working in this particular space.

“It helps to promote really flourishing thriving states of not just children and youth but also adult learners as well all over the world, ensuring that access is as equitable as possible between all the different nation states that are trying to do this work.”

Speaking during the March program, Parry said, “We’re here working on the same project. I began by briefing [the new Fellows] on all the work we’ve achieved to date and the progress we’ve made. The working group has stayed really active. We’ve had monthly video conferences, for example.”

The alliance has received funding from partner organizations. Funding from Qatar Foundation International meant that Parry, along with two other members of the original working group, were able to travel to Washington DC.

“We spent two days in the office literally building out a 37-page document; a preliminary position paper on what this global alliance could do and how it could contribute to the ecosystem,” said Parry, of this trip.

During the working group presentations at the end of Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action, Parry had reconvened with Fellows to explore this alliance further, setting out a tangible action plan for funding, implementation of a digital platform and even hosting a global congress.

Parry said, “Our current thinking is on January 1, 2020, it transitions from interim arrangements with Salzburg as a secretariat, which is the current arrangement, to a standalone organization which is doing this work.”

The working group is due to reconvene at Schloss Leopoldskron on March 29 to 30. Parry said, “It’s just coming together to try to move forward even further.

“After that, it’s actually about going pretty hard after grants, pitching to funders, to philanthropists and foundations to see if we can find opportunities there.”

Ayla Bonfiglio, founder, and principal at the Conflict and Education Learning Laboratory (CELL) Foundation, presented the alliance’s principle goals during the workshop presentation at the most recent program. These are:

1. To promote understanding of SEL-LS (Social and Emotional Learning and Life Skills) and an awareness of its role in helping learners to thrive in school, work and life.

2. To connect and coordinate international, regional, national and local... SEL stakeholders, initiatives and resources.

3. To empower local and national decision-makers and practitioners with scalable frameworks for implementation and action.”

Salzburg Global Seminar looks forward to supporting the still-to-be-named alliance to grow in the months ahead.
Social and Emotional Learning in Crises and Conflicts

Cornelia Janke and Margi Bhatt discuss SEL’s power to help children in adverse contexts

Lucy Browett

Participants at the program Social and Emotional Learning: Time for Action explored many aspects of SEL, from digital and cultural identities to assessment and measuring of SEL metrics.

While participants come from a variety of nations, backgrounds and disciplines, the importance of implementing SEL into curriculums and schools was reiterated time and time again.

Cornelia Janke is the director of Education in Crisis & Conflict Network (ECCN), a USAID initiative, which brings together policymakers, researchers, and practitioners working in education in crisis and conflict situations.

She said of SEL, “It’s important for everyone because it’s an essential element of how humans learn to be human. It’s not something that we just do once when we’re children. We do it throughout our lives.”

For the millions of children in crisis and conflict situations, obtaining social emotional skills is of the utmost importance.

Janke said, “Especially in contexts where children have experienced very adverse or violent situations, it’s helpful to have a little toolbox that includes social skills, emotional skills, and cognitive skills all working together to help them make sense of that experience at whatever life stage, whether they’re children or youth or even adults.

“Without those tools, it’s just that much harder to be resilient, bounce back, move on and grow.”

These tools are crucial for children who are dealing with various traumas as a result of the conflict situation they are in, and helping them to process their surroundings.

“Social emotional skills are taught by and honed through trusting and stable relationships with a range of people in our lives, whether that’s in our family, whether that’s in a school setting or a work setting or a spiritual community...

“If we help children build that skill-set in one setting, they will be able to transfer it into other settings and be able to use that to continue to build relationships in their community. From those relationships, they can then begin to participate in a more cohesive social environment. That’s what we all want and need, of course.”

ECCN shares tools and practices, as well as knowledge, as part of its community of USAID staff and implementing partners.

On the research side, organizations such as the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE) curate the work of SEL researchers on a global scale, complemented by other initiatives such as ECCN.

Margi Bhatt is the coordinator of education policy for (INEE). Bhatt said, “As a network of more than 15,000 individual members and 130 partner organizations in 190 countries, it’s really important for us to be a convener of the knowledge and evidence for Social and Emotional Learning in education in emergency contexts, so we can ensure those who need resources have access to them and duplication is avoided.

“It’s important for us to use our strength as a network to provide advocacy and impact policy, to represent voices at tables where they are generally not represented.”

Within the education policy working group of the network, members have already developed a background paper and guidance for psychosocial support and social and emotional learning, which will be disseminated by webinars and training modules.

The members are also conducting a mapping exercise of currently used frameworks and tools for academic and social and emotional learning in crisis and conflict contexts.

Additionally, the members, who are all volunteers, are also developing a unified framework for social and emotional learning in partnership with Harvard University’s EASEL Lab, and supporting, through a reference group, the Measurement and Metrics Initiative of the International Rescue Committee and New York University.

The work of INEE is important to ensure that “research gaps” are filled. Curating the already existing research prevents duplication, but there are still areas to be explored when it comes to research of SEL in crisis and conflict contexts.

Bhatt said of the journey to filling these gaps, “It’s a big, big task. But we are up for it.”

“I think one of the things that we really need to focus on is a way to harness all of the activity that’s happening in Social and Emotional Learning research and figure out a way to house all of this activity to make sure those who need it can and do access it.

“I think the INEE learning agenda will contribute to better understanding the gaps in research, regionally, in education in emergencies (including SEL) and facilitate the connection of researchers and practitioners.

“We connect and represent a wide range of stakeholders, and the resources produced by INEE are global and open resources, so we are well positioned to facilitate the curation and dissemination of SEL knowledge and resources for the education in emergencies sector.”

The conversation will be continued in the next program in the multi-year series Education for Tomorrow’s World in December 2019. Education and Workforce Opportunities for Refugees and Migrants will bring together experts, policymakers and practitioners from a wide range of organizations, sectors, and countries to develop policy and financing solutions that can create better education outcomes and life chances for both refugees and displaced people and their host communities.
Postcards from Schloss Leopoldskron

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What Are Your Hopes and Expectations Moving Forward After the Program?

Lucy Browett

“Helen Keller has a great line. She said, “Ideas without action are worthless.” My hope is that these conversations spark new collaborations. But even beyond that, actually, they spark new entities, new organizations, new research projects that actually create real change in the world.”

Louka Parry
Director of Academy at Education Changemakers, Australia

“With respect to our organization, I think we are going to develop our curriculum to be an interactive curriculum. So that’s why we are very interested in integrating SEL inside our interactive curriculum to be an urgent part. In order to deliver SEL, in a soft way, which includes life skills, child protection policy... We’re looking for the sustainability of this seminar and to keep in touch with all the partners here in order to benefit from their expertise.”

Samar El Ahmadieh
Department head in the Educational Psychology Department (CERD), Lebanon

“One of the key expectations is obviously a continuation of the dialogue that we’ve had – the debates about social emotional learning. What I’m most excited about [are] the tangible next steps of creating this global alliance. Not just the community here that gathered in Salzburg... but the extended ecosystem that we are all connected to around the world, so that we can not just create a platform to connect each other, but go beyond that to really drive action in promoting and advocating for social emotional learning around the world.”

Manjula Dissanayake
Founder and director of the Educate Lanka Foundation, Sri Lanka

“I’d like to build on the energy and the relationships in the network that I’ve formed this week through the developing global alliance... Individuals that I’ve had the chance to connect to and use that large body of knowledge and expertise and experience. [Also], building a new school. A new school that looks at university preparation differently, not just from an economic standpoint but through a whole person standpoint, and there are tons of experts from this week who can help me do that.”

Adam Beeson
Co-founder of SI Global Academy, USA

“ECCN sponsored a number of Fellows from the Global South to participate in this wonderful opportunity to really think a bit more holistically and deeply about Social and Emotional Learning. What I really hope is that they’ll be able to take that back with them to their own place of work, in their own communities, and begin to build out the appreciation of and the use of social emotional learning in those contexts.”

Cornelia Janke
Director, Education in Crisis & Conflict Network (ECCN), USA

If you and your working group continue to work together on new projects after Salzburg, let us know!
Email Dominic Regester
dregester@SalzburgGlobal.org with any outcomes or impact from this program.