Policy Report

Perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning in Tertiary Education

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RESEARCH REPORT

Perspectives on Social and Emotional Learning in Tertiary Education

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In addition to literacy and numeracy skills, social and emotional skills are increasingly recognized as being essential for success in school and beyond. This commentary paper summarizes the discussions from a 2018 seminar on social and emotional learning (SEL) in tertiary education in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. The summary is framed through the lenses of competition, cooperation, and complementarity. While institutions of higher education compete for students, they cooperate by leveraging knowledge of how students succeed at a particular institution and they seek complementarity by recognizing that student/institutional fit may increase completion. Their shared goal is for students to succeed in getting to, through, and beyond tertiary education.

In June 2018, Educational Testing Service (ETS) and Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS) convened the 3-day seminar "How Social and Emotional Learning Helps Students in Getting To, Through and Beyond College." The seminar had a regional focus on Canada, Mexico, and the United States. In total, 48 educators, policy makers, practitioners, and researchers who represented secondary education, postsecondary or tertiary education, and perspectives on work and graduate studies participated in the seminar. The geographical breakdown was 30 participants from the United States, 10 from Mexico, six from Canada, one from Chile, and one from Austria. The geographic perspective was enriched in discussions as several participants worked in multiple countries.

Concurrent with the planning and execution of the June 2018 "How Social and Emotional Learning Helps Students in Getting To, Through and Beyond College," the European Higher Education Society (EAIR) announced their 40th anniversary meeting theme for August 2018. They selected competition, cooperation, and complementarity in higher education. The three Cs—competition, cooperation, and complementarity—are useful for framing how postsecondary education is positioning social and emotional learning (SEL) in the student experience. Although higher education institutions compete for students, they may also cooperate both internally and externally to help students succeed at a particular institution, and they may seek complementarity in their recognition that student/institutional fit may increase the odds of completion. The shared goal is for students to succeed in getting to, through, and beyond higher education. Institutions are cognizant that today's students are increasingly diverse in what they bring to higher education due to recent shifts in immigration and demographics. Although conventional indicators and assessments of literacy and numeracy are valuable in the admissions process and in teaching and learning experiences, institutions are seeking complementary measures for learning more about students social and emotional skills in an effort to increase rates of access, retention, persistence, and completion, as well as postdegree pursuits such as careers and postbaccalaureate education.

In this paper, I lay out the background to the seminar and the connection of SEL to getting students to, through, and beyond tertiary education. I also present the key seminar discussion points through the lens of competition, cooperation, and complementarity to frame how postsecondary education is positioning SEL in the student experience.

Contextual Factors for Canada, Mexico, and the United States

Two important contextual factors were acknowledged at the outset of the planning. First, the educational pathways through each country differ.[1] Second, the three countries are not at the same point with respect to educational attainment

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Table 1 Educational Attainment of 25- to 64-Year-Olds (2017) in Canada, Mexico, and the United States

Country	Below upper secondary	Upper secondary or postsecondary nontertiary		Tertiary				All levels of education
		Upper secondary	Postsecondary nontertiary	Short-cycle tertiary	Bachelor's or equivalent	Master's or equivalent	Doctoral or equivalent	
	0–2[a]	3	4	5	6	7	9	
Canada	9	24	11	26	21	10[c]	[d]	100
Mexico	63	20	[b]	1	15	1	0	100
United States	10	44[c]	[d]	11	23	11	2	100

[a]In most countries, data refer to *ISCED 2011* (United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, & UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2011). [b]Not applicable. [c]Includes data from another category. [d]Data included in another column. *Source:* Adapted from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2018).

for the adult population. Canada has the highest proportion (57%) of 25- to 64-year-olds with a tertiary credential, followed by the United States with 47% and Mexico with 17% (see Table 1).

Background to the Seminar

The impetus for the June 2018 seminar began with a similar ETS and SGS session held in December 2016 and followed by two regional seminars. Specifically, ETS and SGS partnered on the "Getting Smart: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills" seminar in Salzburg, Austria in December 2016. The seminar brought together 42 educators, policy makers, innovators, and researchers from 17 countries (Austria, Bangladesh, Brazil, Chile, Croatia, France, India, Israel, Japan, Malta, Portugal, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Switzerland, Uganda, United Kingdom, and the United States) to consider the challenges and benefits of fostering SEL.

The key themes and questions participants examined were the following:

- What are the political, organizational, and financial constraints that education leaders face in promoting SEL?
- How strong is the evidence base for SEL?
- Where is further research most urgent?
- How do we best measure social and emotional skills?
- Which further practical tools are needed for scaled-up implementation?
- What are the next steps that education leaders and other stakeholders can take to leverage opportunities for SEL and enhance support to students, particularly those in adversity?

Participants in the 2016 seminar wrote "The Salzburg Statement: Measuring and Evaluating Social and Emotional Skills,"[2] which serves to raise awareness of social and emotional skills with policy makers and other key people of influence in addition to serving as an advocacy tool. Advancing the global knowledge about SEL, as well as hearing from colleagues who implement programs focused on SEL, has the potential to contribute to attaining multiple targets of the United Nations Member States for the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).[3] These 17 SDGs call for all countries to form a global partnership to mitigate poverty and other deprivations as well as to improve health, gender equality, and the climate. ETS and SGS assert that these SEL-focused seminars contribute to advancing Target #4, quality education; Target #8, decent work and economic growth; and Target #10, reduced inequalities.

One outgrowth of the seminar was the recognition that our conversation could be amplified by having dialogs in different areas of the world. Regional convenings would facilitate colleagues examining in greater depth the SEL topics that are most critical to their own country and area of the world. The regional seminar in Santiago, Chile, in November 2017 targeted issues important for Latin America, and the one held in Dead Sea, Jordan, in February 2017 targeted important issues in the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey (also referred to as the MENAT region). Both planning teams identified Pre-K–12 education, teacher preparation, and measurement and assessment to be among the timeliest SEL needs for their respective populations. The one noteworthy difference in the two seminars was the emphasis on education in emergencies[4] for the Jordan seminar.

In the United States, organizations such as the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)[5] and the Aspen Institute[6] have focused on the Pre-K–12 SEL education experience. Less attention has been paid to

SEL in the context of postsecondary education. It is with this backdrop that ETS proposed tertiary education as the segment of the educational pathway to shine a light on SEL issues in June 2018. The SGS agreed. Although students were the focus of the seminar, educators, administrators and staff, and government and business people were also mentioned.

The June 2018 seminar was designed with multiple format types as well as multiple opportunities to informally share knowledge and exchange best practices. One example is the progressive reception and dinner on the first night. The progressive format facilitated participants sitting with people they did not know, and it brought participants from different countries and occupations together.

There were four panel discussions with four speakers with at least one of the speakers representing Canada, Mexico, or the United States. The panel topics were the following:

- Setting the Scene: Supply and Demand Perspectives on the SEL Landscape
- Setting the Scene: Case Studies of SEL Programs
- Teaching & Learning: What Do Educators in Formal and Informal Settings Need to Create Learning Opportunities that Incorporate SEL?
- Research & Assessment: What is the Current State of Research and Assessment into SEL and What are the Future Directions?

A Knowledge Café format provided an opportunity for colleagues to outline their research or their direct programmatic work with undergraduate or graduate students and educators and ask a question of participants. Five seminar participants hosted Knowledge Cafés. They facilitated three 30-min conversations over an hour and a half. Remaining seminar participants joined three different Knowledge Cafés. This format optimizes the number of people Knowledge Cafés hosts hear and learn from. The value of these sessions is the conversation with other individuals.

Why Focus on SEL and Getting to, Through, and beyond Tertiary Education

Microsoft Education's "The Class of 2030 and Life-Ready Learning: The Technology Imperative" asserts that students who graduate from high school in 2030 (10 years from now) will "graduate better prepared for their future if they have a strong social and emotional foundation that is developed through a personalized learning environment" (Holzapfel, 2018). The Microsoft Education report (https://education.minecraft.net/wp-content/uploads/13679_EDU_Thought_Leadership_Summary_revisions_5.10.18.pdf) may be foreshadowing the experience and expectations that future student cohorts will bring to campuses.

Both inside and outside academia, many are realizing that college readiness is more than a matter of academic preparation, that social and emotional skills are essential for postsecondary and occupational success (ACT, 2015; Mattern et al., 2014). In fact, in some cases, these skills may be just as or even more important than academic skills (Hart Research Associates, 2013; Mattern et al., 2014). Going under alternative names such as "noncognitive skills," "21st century skills," and "soft skills" (Jones & Doolittle, 2017), SEL skills—such as persistence, motivation, engagement, time management, and collaboration—are necessary for education and work in the 21st century and predictive of achievement in these categories (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005; Farrington et al., 2012). The literature has shown that college enrollment and persistence are correlated with SEL skills like academic self-confidence, motivation, and time management. (Heckman et al., 2006; Heckman & Kautz, 2013; Lotkowski et al., 2004). In fact, SEL skills are linked with academic ones and need to be supported together (Jones & Kahn, 2017). Outside of academics, the SEL skills of teamwork and collaboration, along with the cognitive skills of critical thinking and problem solving, are regarded as vital for workplace success by employers (Casner-Lotto & Barrington, 2006; Hart Research Associates, 2013).

Colleges have been encouraged to utilize an integrated method that "addresses the social, emotional, and academic needs of students" (Lotkowski et al., 2004) both before and while students are attending classes. There is growing collective support among higher education stakeholders to transform the college admissions process to communicate the value of students' efforts to help others and their communities and to more effectively elicit information from students to describe these experiences as part of a balanced admissions profile (Weissbourd et al., 2016). Moreover, the University Innovation Alliance—comprising 11 US universities—is exemplary in its mission to enable collaboration to develop and share innovative ways to meet low-income students where they are and create optimal, person-driven learning experiences and supports to improve student success rates (University Innovation Alliance, n.d.).

The benefits of developing student SEL purportedly carryover beyond students' initial postsecondary experiences to enable success in professional or graduate school endeavors. For example, medical students' ability to regulate emotions, rather than cognitive ability, is tied to more effective communication and interpersonal sensitivity in patient–physician interactions, an essential aspect of medical practice (Libbrecht et al., 2014). The capacity to self-regulate and self-motivate enables doctoral students to complete arduous graduate writing and persist toward graduation (Spaulding & Rockinson-Szapkiw, 2012; Sverdlik et al., 2018). Considering high attrition rates among doctoral students, such SELs appear to play a protective role in their doctoral degree completion.

Strong SEL that supports students' capacity to succeed in attaining degrees in higher education also enables an effective workforce (Committee for Economic Development, 2018). In fact, the landscape of the labor market appears to be shifting to comprise more jobs that require soft skills among employees to optimize teamwork and task coordination (Deming, 2017). The most important soft skills cited by US corporate and academic employers include teamworking skills, analytical reasoning/critical thinking, complex problem solving, agility and adaptability, ethical judgment, and decision making (Bloomberg Next, 2018). Recent data, however, suggest a soft skills gap among employees who, because of this deficit, are ill-equipped to perform at a high level in the workplace (Business Roundtable, 2017a; Bloomberg Next, 2018).

Research on employee engagement shifts the spotlight from employees to employers, citing their responsibility in creating workplace environments and processes that center on worker needs and strengths and "cultivate human capital" for the sake of productivity and profit (Gallup, 2017, p. 3). Current challenges that may pose problems for employers interested in making such changes include lack of formal plans to prepare their workforce for future job demands and lack of collaboration between business and academia to establish an education-to-work skills pipeline (Bloomberg Next, 2018). In fact, when it comes to employee soft skills, business leaders view academia as an appropriate context for developing teamwork, collaboration, and emotional intelligence or other skills employers are looking for in future employees.

To address persisting obstacles around employee skill gaps, stakeholders are making concerted efforts to understand current gaps and identify strategies to collectively address them (Committee for Economic Development, 2018). In 2017, the Committee for Economic Development engaged parents and business leaders from five US communities in conversations to discuss perspectives on student aspirations, workplace demands, and what could be done to support career readiness prior to college entry. Based on the collective goal of helping students attain career success, suggested recommendations included increased collaboration and coordination between stakeholders; increased stakeholder communication; access to tools, resources, and supports to enable students to identify appropriate career paths; providing students with work-based learning opportunities; and developing student soft skills. Additionally, a recent Business Roundtable (2017b) report summarized numerous examples of endeavors within the US business sector to improve diversity in the workforce and close skills gaps. Company CEOs across various industries report partnering with communities and educational institutions to enable K–12 skill building, create postsecondary training opportunities, and develop skills, including social and emotional skills, among current workers. In sum, collective stakeholder efforts are underway to promote SEL development and prepare youth for the workforce.

Conceptual Framework for the Study

Education involves many different interactions of many different actors—educational institutions, students, staff, resources both material (financial) or symbolic (prestige). The richness of the presentations and the conversations at the June 2018 seminar reflected the different perspectives from the participants. The impetus for considering the lenses of competition, cooperation, and complementarity can come from internal as well as external forces (the market, regulators, and policy makers).

In writing this paper, I set out to determine if and how the seminar discussions aligned or did not align with the concepts of competition, cooperation, and complementarity. Three questions guided my approach to the analysis:

1. How is or can SEL be a competitive influence in getting students to, through, and beyond postsecondary education?
2. How is or can SEL be a cooperative influence in getting students to, through, and beyond postsecondary education?
3. How is or can SEL be a complementary factor in getting students to, through, and beyond postsecondary education?

I employed a two-step process for grouping the seminar themes into the three categories. First, I consulted my notes from the symposium, artifacts from the symposium that included four live graphic recordings[7] from the seminar, and

sticky note statements during check-in exercises with the group. Then, after my initial grouping exercise, two ETS colleagues who participated in the symposium provided an informal interrater reliability analysis of my thematic clustering and messaging.

Seminar Discussion Points as Framed through the Three Cs

Competition

The Lexico (n.d.) defines *competition* as "the activity or condition of striving to gain or win something by defeating or establishing superiority over others." Three broad themes came up in the 2018 SEL seminar regarding SEL and competition. They were the following:

- Talent development and prestige at multiple levels
- Adding to the student profile at the undergraduate and graduate/professional levels
- The need for dedicated resources for SEL

Talent Development and Prestige at Multiple Levels

This theme is based on seminar participants comments indicating that supporting students' SEL may yield benefits for students as well as for educational institutions and beyond. The benefits may be reciprocal in nature, as honing SEL may help students become more competitive as candidates for higher education and more successful in their career pursuits. Institutions may also gain from these efforts as they may become more attractive to prospective students, improve their standing among competitors, and be recognized for their broader social impact.

Educators and administrators in K–12 educational systems recognize that they represent an essential early touch point in preparing students for postsecondary education and beyond. Seminar participants learned firsthand about an effort in the Ottawa-Carlton School District, in which stakeholders worked collectively to define what SEL skills students need to have to be competitive in college and career settings. After attaining community-wide buy-in, a large-scale program was implemented to develop these essential SEL skills.

A compelling viewpoint that emerged during symposium conversations emphasized the value that improving SEL has for both students and the institutions that serve them. Students with strong SEL skills could successfully compete in two ways, including being viewed as more attractive candidates to higher education institutions and future employers and being more selective in their decisions for their pursuit of a high-quality postsecondary education. For example, students who contribute to their school and society may be a more attractive applicant to a college than a peer who only presents test scores and grades.

Higher education institutions could compete more successfully, too, and at multiple levels, according to symposium participants. A higher education institution with a reputation for operating within a culture of empathy that encourages respect for self/others, cares about meeting the individual needs of students from orientation on, and educates families/students about SEL may have a competitive edge as a place where students want to be and learn. Three symposium attendees representing universities in the United States, Canada, and Mexico shared how creating an environment that promotes SEL is prioritized because of the positive impact that can result from such efforts. Institutions not only can benefit through improving their appeal to consumers (e.g., students and their families), but can also distinguish themselves from a reputation, research, teaching, and international standpoint within an increasingly competitive global market. Similarly, corporations want to be competitive in the global marketplace and seek to distinguish themselves to attract and retain employees. The Top Employer's Institute[8] ranks companies in various industries across the globe on their "people practices" and efforts to positively impact the lives of their employees. Dimension Data, which operates in the United States, Mexico, and Canada, received high marks for providing exceptional working conditions for employees, prioritizing that talents of all employees across all levels of the organization are nurtured and developed, serving as leaders in human resources, and continually improving and developing employment and professional development practices.

Finally, on a broad level, symposium participants felt that society wins when higher education systems and corporations prioritize SEL. Such efforts are viewed as supporting the health of our society. As one participant observed, "SEL can transform the higher education landscape and is a 'win' for everyone. As SEL moves from theory to practice, we will begin to see and experience a healthier society."

Adding to Student Profiles at the Undergraduate and Graduate Levels

Unlike the first theme, which emphasized a competitive edge tied to SEL, a second theme emerged reflecting competing perspectives about how SEL data should and could be used. For example, a long-standing limitation of higher education admissions criteria is the nearly exclusive focus on cognitive or academic skills and knowledge to gauge students' academic success and potential. Symposium attendees called attention to their experiences of literacy and numeracy scores and grades being pitted against social and emotional skills, including the capacity to collaborate and innovate. Participants advocated for collecting and using both types of data as criteria for admissions. They maintained that having a range of data and information for students will be necessary for comprehensive or more holistic approaches to admissions in order to see all that students may bring to their education.

A second area of concern raised by symposium participants around using SEL data pertains to lack of clarity in its purpose and application. Symposium participants questioned whether SEL assessment results would be used formatively to, for example, enable academic counselors to plan how to support students or summatively, for example as criteria to determine admission or graduation. This discussion highlighted how SEL assessments could be used either for a high stakes or low stakes purpose, which could have very different implications for students and institutions. One situation in which lack of purpose and planning around SEL data collection and use could result in negative implications is in informing rankings and alumni outcome data. Some participants expressed concern that educational institutions may make assertions about graduates' accomplishments without always having the appropriate data to support their claims. In sum, aligning perspectives among staff and faculty of secondary or higher education institutions about the value and purpose of collecting SEL data could improve the likelihood that the right data are collected in ways that support various goals at the student and institutional levels.

The Need for Dedicated Resources and Prioritization for Promoting SEL

The symposium brought to light various potential barriers in the form of competing resources and priorities that hinder efforts to move forward with efforts promoting SEL. First, insufficient resources dedicated to SEL emerged as a persistent barrier both at the national and institutional levels. Both within K–12 and postsecondary educational institutions, there is competition for scarce resources, whether physical, financial, intellectual, or human. Often, resource allocation favors non-SEL pursuits. This problem appears to transcend national lines, as suggested through similar experiences shared about efforts to promote SEL in the United States, Canada, and Mexico. An example from Mexico is that at the national level in K–12, only $14 per student is spent to conduct a 20-min lesson each week.[9] Colleagues from Mexico maintained this is not enough to provide the type of educational experience students need and should have. A question that emerged from the discussion that merits further consideration centers on identifying strategies to gain attention for SEL when resources are awarded.

Participants described additional constraints at the institutional level that reflect competing priorities and policy. A common obstacle for SEL is its tangential status within educational curriculum in comparison to standard curricular offerings such as mathematics and language arts. Schools and systems must decide whether SEL should be a specific focus or at least better integrated into the extant curriculum. Graduate programs face a similar problem, as SEL is deemed as necessary and valued but not prioritized within the context of PhD/academic training.

Broader institutional policy constraints may further hinder efforts to increase SEL, according to participants. For example, if SEL falls outside of the merit and reward structure, would it be perceived as an extraneous effort or a burden to incorporate into staff professional development or into current curricula or programming? Working with faculty who are part of unions that have a strong influence on faculty duties was discussed as another type of constraint that can limit what educators, staff, and researchers can do if they want to integrate SEL into their current practice.

Cooperation

The Lexico (n.d.) defines *cooperation* as "the action or process of working together to the same end." Two broad themes emerged during the seminar discussions with regard to SEL and cooperation. They were the following:

- Common language and approach
- Three core cooperative mechanisms for advancing SEL (The How)

Common Language and Approach

The first major theme to emerge for cooperation suggests that, with respect to SEL, cooperation involves developing a common language and approach. Both internationally and across levels of the educational system, participants saw divergence in the models and approaches for promoting and assessing SEL. In Canada's Ottawa-Carlton School District, there was a community-wide effort to engage K–12 students in collaborative and nontraditional school work that promotes SEL and creates a broader environment that supports this effort. Mexico's K–12 approach, Construye T, involved weekly 20-min lessons implemented as part of a common curriculum. Trinity College, a US university in Hartford, Connecticut, focuses on student orientation to incorporate SEL to reframe new students' expectations and experiences. Universidad Tecmilenio in Mexico uses an ecosystem approach to thread SEL through all facets of teaching and learning for students and staff. Participants observed that although these approaches may hold numerous strengths for targeted stakeholders, they are not implemented based on a common definition or set of best practices.

Three key aspects of cooperation discussed included establishing a common language, universal definitions and set of constructs, and establishing a common set of best practices to guide the work. Symposium participants acknowledged the importance of developing a common language around SEL that is culturally sensitive and applicable across cultures and different demographic groups. Given wide differences nationally and internationally, the task of applying a collective approach to develop a common vision for SEL that involves building curriculum, teaching and learning training, and measurement and assessment tools was viewed as a challenge. A lingering question that deserves further attention is whether a common language and core set of SEL constructs for tertiary education can be developed. Although all stakeholders from every educational institution, business, association, society, or country would not be required to have the same priority for all SEL concepts or use the same assessments, they could benefit from having a common purpose and starting point for identifying the critical concepts to address and the best methods for measurement.

One exercise during the symposium spoke to this need. Participants weighed in on the current state of research and assessment by answering three questions:

1. What is one postsecondary SEL success indicator?
2. What is the indicator's outcome?
3. How would you measure such evidence?

Attendees provided a wide range of responses that included many common SEL concepts (e.g., self-regulation or perseverance), related outcomes (e.g., goal achievement and greater retention), and examples of evidence (e.g., college diploma or mental health scores). This exercise highlighted variability in perspectives on key concepts of SEL, their measurement, and implications for future outcomes. More importantly, it underscores the value of configuring a shared vision and common set of constructs and assessment approaches to guide this work.

Establishing best practices for teaching SEL and using SEL assessments reflects another discussion theme addressing how cooperation can help establish common ground for stakeholders. Regarding teaching SEL, two looming concerns emerged around whether (and how best) educators should be responsible for teaching SEL. Participants discussed lack of consensus around taking an integrative approach or treating SEL as a separate topic. At the postsecondary education level, many faculty are not explicitly trained to teach. If they are to appropriately incorporate SEL into their content courses, it is yet to be seen whether that will require a radical transformation of (or adjustments to) practice. One groundbreaking example that could integrate SEL into graduate student work involves a fully collaborative dissertation. This would mark a drastic shift in the approach faculty take for assessing doctoral candidates' capacity to fulfill graduate requirements. An important next step could involve working together to elevate the conversation as a priority to figure out how to best teach SEL and to begin sharing effective teaching practices.

Along the same vein, establishing a set of effective research and evaluation programs and practices to measure and learn from SEL assessments could lend value at the tertiary education level, according to symposium participants. Stakeholders would need to come together to discuss what is measured and how as well as the uses of the assessment data for purposes of SEL teaching and learning. Some interesting aspects to consider would involve deciding how to use assessments as mechanisms for learning opportunities (e.g., practice how to connect, listen, and respond) and deciding who should be

involved in interactive assessment development. The ultimate goal of the work would be to incorporate SEL assessment to inform efforts with students and enable them to reflect on their experiences.

Three Core Cooperative Mechanisms for Advancing SEL (The How)

A second takeaway from the symposium discussions about cooperation illustrated the set of key cooperative mechanisms that collectively can advance SEL. Symposium participants learned that communication, partnerships, and alignment of purpose and coordinated efforts across sectors are viewed as three core cooperative processes to move this work forward.

Symposium conversations suggested that the process of communication serves two purposes. The first involves international sharing of ideas. Participants recognized the need to conduct this work regionally to suit their own needs, but they also saw the benefit from connecting globally to continue the conversation at the international level and bring back effective strategies to improve efforts in our respective countries. The second purpose for communication includes educating important stakeholders about the value of SEL, the "why" (e.g., economic sustainability, civic/community building, personal/family growth and benefits) behind such value. The purported outcomes of these communication efforts could be stakeholder buy-in and common understanding of the role of SEL in promoting success in education and in life.

Formal partnerships represent another way that stakeholders could cooperatively work toward the common goal of advancing SEL. Symposium participants discussed the value of partnerships between many types of stakeholders and across sectors. On a broader level, the discussion focused on exploring a possible ecosystem of stakeholders or partners for this work. Possible partners included government, higher education, K–12, accreditors, employers, community, families, business leaders, think tanks, and students. The conversation also touched upon the cooperative nature of certain partnerships where parties could learn from one another as they work toward the same goal. A partnership between policy makers and employers is one example, as both sectors want to learn about and work with higher education but go about it through different means. Another example could involve partnerships between assessment and nonassessment colleagues who may share a common purpose of developing a valid and reliable SEL measurement tool that has real-world application and value.

Alignment of purpose and coordinated efforts across sectors and systems represents the third cooperative process highlighted through symposium discussions. An important question that arose challenged attendees to consider how we could facilitate opportunities to work across institutional silos and within education systems to advance SEL. SEL is viewed as operating on a skill or learning continuum from K–12 through postsecondary education and beyond to the workforce. In other words, social-emotional skills are important at each life stage and in each context. Aligned benchmarks and efforts for promoting SEL across vertical levels of education and career would reflect this continuum. For example, K–12 educators could anticipate skills needed to be successful postentry into higher education. Moreover, higher education would focus on building the individual's capacity to succeed in the workforce.

However, symposium participants identified multiple barriers that hinder such coordinated efforts, such as separate levels of the educational system working in silos rather than aligning their work or confusion around responsibility for facilitating SEL. Sentiments from a symposium participant from Canada echoed these points: "Social-emotional skills, teamwork, and collaboration [are] important to employers. SEL has been [an] important issue for years and discussions have centered on implementing it in postsecondary education." Additionally, "there is tension between employers and schools about who should provide training in those skills."

Thus, the challenge moving forward entails figuring out how to collectively plan to take SEL to the next level, as part of one concrete cross-system in support of SEL learning. Large-scale communication efforts and partnerships were each discussed as useful mechanisms to support the development of such aligned efforts.

Complementarity

The Lexico (n.d.) defines *complementarity* as "a relationship or situation in which two or more different things improve or emphasize each other's qualities." Three broad themes came up in seminar discussions regarding SEL and complementarity. They are as follows:

- Embrace student strengths and interests to promote student success
- Enhance institutional capacity to optimize students' experiences

- Embrace external tools and knowledge

Collectively, the set of themes for complementarity suggest that symposium participants recommend the consideration of available assets, resources, and characteristics of students and institutions, along with external mechanisms that together can optimize student learning and experiences in the context of tertiary education.

Embrace Student Strengths and Interests to Promote Student Success

An important symposium message that emerged highlighted the need for a paradigm shift toward a student-centered approach. This change was viewed as serving multiple purposes to advance SEL. First, it could prompt stakeholders to consider the whole student and the complete set of cognitive and noncognitive skills and knowledge they bring to higher education. An administrator from Trinity College aptly stated that "success is a skillset." One charge to stakeholders involved figuring out how to demonstrate success holistically as students move into higher education. Currently, admissions decisions are primarily informed by static transcripts that report course grades and test scores. An important question is: What are the opportunities for giving students the tools to curate their accomplishments?

Symposium participants identified a gap in opportunities to incorporate and measure SEL and in turn report out via summative student data at all points in the education pathway. However, they also called attention to students' intrinsic interest in SEL and the need to capitalize on this interest because integration of SEL into practice has the potential to improve students' learning experiences and outcomes. A persisting obstacle to overcome so this agenda can move forward is the difficulty in building collective support for including SEL in curricula and including evidence of noncognitive skills on academic transcripts.

The second purpose for applying a student-centered approach is to recognize the wide diversity in background, experiences, and assets across students. It is necessary to acknowledge the diverse set of needs of the student body, which often is comprised of both traditional and nontraditional students who vary in age, geographical distance from the educational venue, work schedule, family responsibilities, and cultural traditions. These, and a host of other factors, dictate students' divergent higher education experiences and expectations. Seminar participants asserted that to promote success across all students and ensure that each student feels welcomed and valued within a university, we need to improve our understanding of their unique needs and what they bring that complements and supplements their academic skills.

Recognizing the tendency to view students using a deficit model approach, another theme from the seminar was for stakeholders to stress the need to view students' skill sets through a strengths-based frame. This would translate into recognizing student skills as having potential for development, rather than as incomplete and in need of repair. The onus would rest with university leadership and staff to use information about students' skills and strengths to purposefully create opportunities that promote retention, persistence, academic performance, graduation, and career outcomes.

Enhance Institutional Capacity to Optimize Students' Experiences

Besides honing in on students' capabilities, seminar participants felt that self-analysis within institutions needs to occur to assess what they bring in terms of capacity to create an environment and programming that supports SEL. Self-analysis of capacity to promote SEL was discussed as applying to both the broader institution level and the educator or faculty level.

Symposium participants questioned whether higher education institutions recognize this responsibility and whether they are prepared to take on this large task. One attendee noted, "I want to think about how we might adapt to young adults entering and going in and through college." Another said, "[The] onus cannot only be on students." Thus, it is necessary to shift the focus from students' readiness for college to colleges' readiness for students.

The challenge for institutions then becomes determining how to permeate SEL throughout established processes and practices—from infrastructure to programming and curriculum to personnel. Symposium discussions pointed to the need for a multipronged effort, given the holistic nature of SEL within higher education. For example, an evaluation can identify when, where, and how SEL happens. This could illuminate the ways in which SEL could be incorporated within both formal and informal learning settings, the multiple touch points to build in and promote SEL, and available infrastructure (e.g., IT's involvement with other departments to develop and disseminate online SEL training) that could be leveraged to advance SEL within a higher education environment. Complementarity would be evident in collective institutional efforts to plan and execute SEL opportunities and programs (e.g., career counseling, living learning communities, athletics, internships) that afford optimal benefit to students and staff.

At the educator or faculty level, it is important to recognize that they are first and foremost content specialists. Symposium participants expressed their viewpoint that the common role for many higher education faculty involves top-down teaching content to students as unchallenged authority figures. Symposium participants considered what would be required to shift away from this structure, so students can play a larger role in their own learning. For example, might the faculty teaching role morph into discussion leader or collaborator? A second shift in faculty approach would involve integrating SEL into course curriculum and assessment. This prompted additional reflection about faculty capacity to make this shift, as they would need to be equipped with SEL and knowledge about how to be intentional in incorporating teachable moments to support SEL. Tying back to institutional capacity, it is necessary for institutions to evaluate what can be done to improve skills and knowledge in faculty, how to support their efforts (e.g., incentivize) to redesign their courses, and which players within institutions would be needed to advance this effort. During the symposium, a K–12 school administrator working in Canadian schools highlighted the value of community learning and professional development opportunities for building capacity for teaching SEL.

Embrace External Tools and Knowledge

The incorporation of technology into efforts to advance SEL was a common symposium theme and is exemplary in representing complementarity. Technology was emphasized as an invaluable resource that can aid in building the capacity of higher education staff and educators in supporting SEL development in students and enable self-directed SEL in educators and students. Additionally, technology was discussed as an important mechanism or interface for improving student–student and student–teacher interactions. In line with this viewpoint, one participant said, "Recognizing technology as [an] opportunity to [for] colearning teaching design, where we bring in the expertise of [the] students and of the teacher." Accessibility is a strength of this medium, in particular for online learning and assessment applications.

A representative from Microsoft Learning challenged symposium participants to consider games such as Minecraft as opportunities to leverage technology for engaging students and innovating student assessments. He called attention to the need to shift perceptions and "move from viewing gaming as a distraction and entertainment to using gaming and technology for positive interaction." Symposium participants felt that students do not want to take just paper and pencil tests. Stakeholders need to understand how gaming and technology creates opportunities for personalizing learning and authentic assessment tasks that can simulate the structure of interactions to move the agenda forward. Continued conversations can identify the various applications of technology for SEL within the context of higher education and beyond (e.g., workforce training).

Conclusions

The lenses of competition, cooperation, and complementarity provided three different perspectives on the discussions that unfolded over the 3-day seminar on SEL in tertiary education in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. While the conversation was limited to participants from three geographic and cultural areas, overall the opportunities for improvement in the incorporation for SEL in tertiary education resonated across the three countries. Perhaps what is most distinguishing is the resources that can be devoted to foster SEL due to different institutional types and within country resources.

Participants recognized that participating in the seminar itself was an act of cooperation. One example that illustrates this principle is the SEL Knowledge Exchange Ask and Offer session whereby each participant makes "an ask" to colleagues and then makes "an offer." For example, a participant who develops instruments asks colleagues if they would pilot instruments at their respective institutions and in turn offers her skills to develop instruments that colleagues would like to have but do not have the skill set for. The intention is to find areas of mutual interest and opportunities for moving the work forward from a research, practice, or policy perspective.

The ETS and SGS collaboration has the potential to be the beginning of a tertiary SEL knowledge alliance. By continuing the work, symposium participants could develop a blue print for a cross-institution, global SEL knowledge alliance that could become an authority on implementing and assessing SEL at higher education institution.

Acknowledgments

Notes

1 For more information on the educational pathways of students in Canada, Mexico, and the United States please see the following reports from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2019a, 2019b, 2019c).

2 https://www.salzburgglobal.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Documents/2010-2019/2016/Session_566/SalzburgGlobal_Statement_566_SEL.pdf

3 See https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdgs

4 According to the Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies **education in emergencies** refers to the quality learning opportunities for all ages in situations of crisis, including early childhood development, primary, secondary, non-formal, technical, vocational, higher, and adult education. Education in emergencies provides physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that can sustain and save lives. https://www.ineesite.org/en/education-in-emergencies

5 See https://casel.org/

6 See https://www.aspeninstitute.org/

7 Frame the Message Ink states that "graphic recording is a dynamic learning process that brings energy and clarity to presentations. It captures the big ideas and creates a frame around the most salient points, converting them into a series of visual images that puts ideas into a context that the audience can hold on to." https://framethemessageink.com/what-i-do/

8 https://www.top-employers.com/en/

9 This was during the Enrique Peña Nieto administration in June 2017.

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