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SALZBURG GLOBAL SEMINAR

Optimizing Talent:

Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide

Higher Education and Lifelong Learning

Schloss Leopoldskron, Salzburg

2–7 October 2012

PART OF THE

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RAPPORTEUR'S REPORT

Optimizing Talent: *Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide*

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Education is an essential key to realizing individual potential. Ideally, an equitable and effective educational system facilitates social mobility, promoting the development and increased prosperity of citizens, and thus of society as a whole. While great strides have been made in giving both children and adults access to high-quality education worldwide, substantial gaps remain. The Salzburg Global Seminar (SGS) and Educational Testing Service (ETS) convened a seminar series to identify where these educational and social mobility gaps still exist, what effect they have, and why they persist — or even widen — despite rapid economic change.

The three SGS-ETS seminars, conducted in 2010, 2011, and 2012, brought together educational researchers, policymakers, and practitioners from six continents and many countries to examine gaps in education access and to develop ideas for closing them. The seminar series aimed to establish cross-national dialogue so that participants could learn more about the education challenges faced by others and could establish relationships with colleagues in different countries. By facilitating these relationships, seminar organizers hoped to foster the development of new ideas for addressing common challenges and closing education and social mobility gaps.

The seminar on higher education, convened 2–7 October 2012, was the third in the series. Sixty-five people — researchers, academics, representatives of philanthropic foundations, and experts in public policy — assembled to discuss gaps in higher education access and equity. Select participants presented papers describing the progress made by their own countries or regions and the challenges and impediments to further progress that remain. The formal presentations, as well as large- and small-group discussions, constituted the central activities of the seminar.

All three SGS-ETS seminars focused on the lack of the “triple As”: “availability, affordability and accessibility.” The third seminar also touched on a further issue, the question of whether higher education sustains elitism. Seminar presentations and discussions highlighted a range of issues: Who determines what is taught? Who pays? What are students’ rights and obligations during and after their studies? How do countries benefit from a more highly educated workforce? How should they position themselves in a world of increased student mobility, internationally operating universities, and labor migration of the well-educated? How can quality and purposefulness be ensured?

This report offers a kaleidoscopic impression of the major topics and findings of the seminar, grouped loosely around four broad themes:

- the added value that tertiary education provides
- equity in tertiary education
- access to tertiary education
- tertiary education policy

In conclusion, the report offers a list of steps that could be taken internationally, nationally, and institutionally to advance equity in higher education.

Added Value of Tertiary Education

Education, including tertiary education, is at the center of the discussion on economic sustainability and development. In most countries, the contribution that higher education and lifelong learning make to economic growth is undisputed, and governments have set targets for increasing the percentage of the population holding post-secondary diplomas of some sort.

“They did go to college but left with nothing (except maybe debt).”

In the United States, whose economy is increasingly shaped by globalization and technological expertise, a worker with only a high school diploma cannot earn enough to sustain a family. Post-secondary certificate programs could offer an alternative to four-year college degrees. A study suggests that holding such a certificate increases the chance of getting a better-paying job. Certificates also can serve as the first rung on the ladder to a college degree or as proof of further training for workers with

college degrees who are seeking career advancement or are engaged in the process of lifelong learning. “Certificate programs can be successful if they promote either: (1) gainful employment and long-term job and income security or (2) the pursuit of a higher-level credential, typically a college degree,” wrote seminar speaker Anthony Carnevale, the Director of the Center on Education and the Workforce at Georgetown University, Washington, D.C., USA, in a paper co-authored by Stephen J. Rose and Andrew R. Hanson. “If they are successful in these two areas, certificate programs will ensure that students considering them will be able to make informed choices about what to study and where to study it, with reasonable expectations about their prospects after graduation ... Today, policymakers do have a role: to ensure that all parties involved know, to the greatest extent possible, that the value of the programs they are funding are transparent for all to see.”

Increasing the rate of higher-education attainment not only fosters inclusion but also supports diversity, argued seminar speaker Jamil Salmi, a former World Bank official, and his collaborator Roberta Malee Bassett. “A diverse and inclusive workforce is necessary to drive innovation, foster creativity, and guide business strategies,” Salmi and Bassett wrote in their paper, “Opportunities for All? The Equity Challenge in Tertiary Education.” “Multiple voices lead to new ideas, new services, and new products, and encourage out-of-the-box thinking. Today, companies no longer view diversity and inclusion efforts as separate from their other business practices, and recognize that a diverse workforce can differentiate them from their competitors by attracting top talent and capturing new clients.”

The transformation of post-secondary education into mass education necessitates a new social contract among different classes to create a pact that sustains the fabric of society. With higher minimum education levels needed to sustain the economy, society needs to allocate more money for education, including post-secondary education, and economic growth has to occur in order to finance this spending. But challenges remain. Today, many economies are struggling, leading to increased unemployment and cuts in funding for education, including higher education. And even as governments promote equity through the massification of higher education, institutions of higher education often want to retain their elite status, which brings with it benefits in both funding and recognition. Society must pursue two sometimes conflicting goals: achieving equity

through the massification of higher education, and fostering the elite through mechanisms for rewarding or recognizing universities.

The challenge of reconciling these competing aims is one subject of “The State of University Policy for Progress in Europe,” a policy report by the nongovernmental organization Empower European Universities (EEU). The study examines how national governments’ higher education policies foster economic innovation across Europe. Among the key questions the report asks are these: Has the massification of higher education over the past four to five decades promoted equal access to higher education? Which policies have, in Europe, been the most effective at promoting such access? What is the effect of this massification on economic development? Did opportunity-enhancing policies promote not only economic growth but also social betterment? The report found that higher participation rates in higher education and increased equality of access go hand in hand with higher per capita income. But the picture looks different from country to country. In some of the richer EU member states, the massification of higher education over the past decades has mostly benefitted students from wealthier backgrounds, so that equality of opportunity has hardly improved; in other countries, massification has greatly enhanced equality of opportunity. The study recommends policies that empower higher education institutions by providing them with appropriate resources and regulatory environments.

Equity in Tertiary Education

Seminar speakers approached the question of equity in higher education from a variety of angles, in keeping with the social-science strategy of triangulation — i.e., double-checking findings by using multiple research methods to obtain them. Among the common starting points, which implicitly assume that key issues related to equity and higher education do not differ significantly from country to country, were these:

- Social justice demands that individuals be given equal opportunities to fully develop their capabilities, but the political environment is at best indifferent and at worst hostile to the changes required to advance equity.
- Higher education remains largely elitist, with strong disparities in both access and success.
- Inequality in higher education is largely an extension of inequality at lower levels of education.
- Additional barriers can be both financial and non-financial. Among the non-financial barriers are inadequacies of information, motivation, academic preparation, and social capital.

“It is not wrong to be different;
it is wrong to be treated
differently if you are.”

Some conference speakers discussed macro-societal factors influencing equity in higher education, arguing that education is caught between two powerful opposing forces: capitalism, which drives inequality, and democracy, which fosters equality. In the past, capitalism and democracy made common cause against the hierarchical powers of the Church and the nobility, with capitalism functioning as the banker for democracy. But in the modern world, the two pull in opposite directions, with capitalism propelling concentrations of wealth and power that can undermine democratic systems. As levels of educational attainment become more and more

closely linked to income-earning potential, the pressure to make post-secondary education more widely available increases. In this view, promoting higher levels of educational attainment — and thus increasing citizens' power to thrive in the employment marketplace — is one way that democratic governments can address the inequalities that capitalism inevitably facilitates. Governments can advance this agenda by levying taxes and providing such services as low tuition fees.

Given the crucial role that government policy can play in optimizing talent and advancing equity, it is imperative to concentrate advocacy less on those within the educational community and more on external decision makers. At last year's conference, a speaker said, "If you believe education is too expensive, try ignorance." At this year's conference, that message was sharpened with the highlighting of a slogan of the Occupy movement: "One day the poor will have nothing left to eat but the rich." But by demonstrating that increased equity in higher education is linked to greater economic growth, research conducted by EEU suggests an alternative to this disturbing scenario. Less than one-tenth of 1 percent of the money the EU spent to rescue its banks would fully fund all the EU's students, the report found.

Access to Tertiary Education

As policymakers consider how best to close achievement gaps and advance social mobility, they can draw on the experiences of countries around the world, where social experiments have yielded both promising results and cautionary lessons. Participants in the SGS-ETS seminar discussed a

wide variety of such initiatives, ranging from the harmonization of higher education in Africa to the establishment of prior-learning accreditation systems in Moldova, to teacher support activities in the Philippines. Among these initiatives:

"The best decision any one of us can make is how we choose our parents."

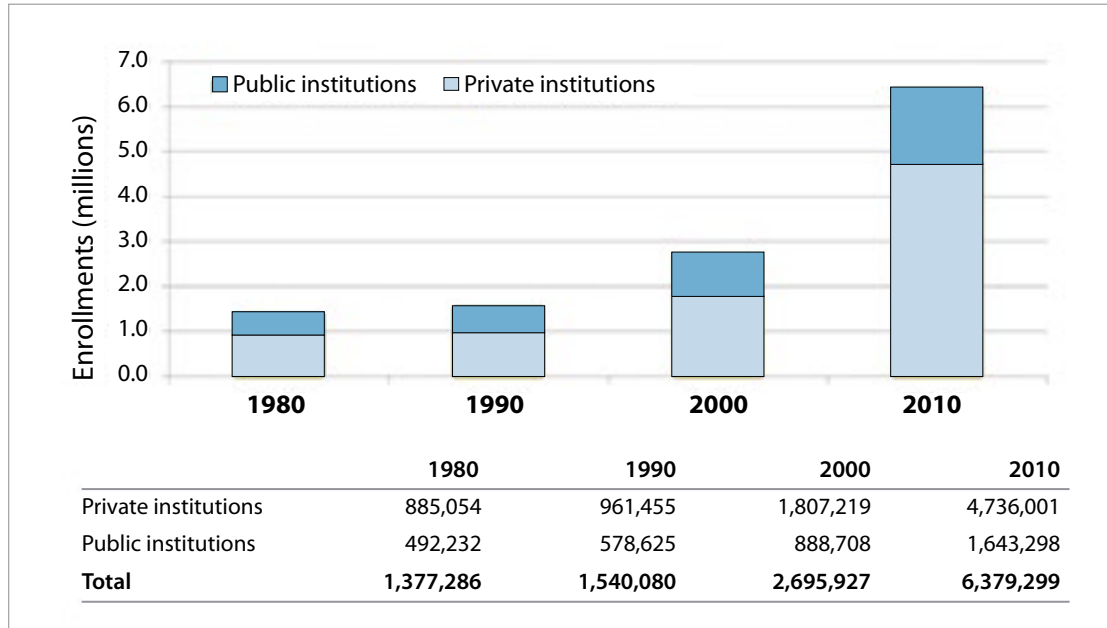
Catering to demand

In Europe and the United States, the higher education sector is struggling to adapt to economic challenges, the demands of globalization, and changing student demographics. But in the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, the dilemmas are different: these countries' economies are growing too fast for existing institutions of higher education to keep pace, either qualitatively or quantitatively, with the demand for more education and training at all levels.

Of the world's 7 billion people, 600 million are between 18 and 22 years old, and about 30 percent of those young people — some 180 million — are enrolled in traditional higher education. To double that age cohort's level of participation in tertiary education to 60 percent means finding room for another 180 million students. Brazil alone would need to educate an additional 5 million learners. And educational needs encompass more than students of traditional college age. In China, for example, 200 million migrants from rural areas to industrial centers need continuous training to remain employable. It is difficult to imagine that existing public universities can grow big enough and fast enough to accommodate these staggering levels of demand. Alternative models are needed, especially if we hope to broaden access.

Increasing enrollment in private institutions of higher education is one way of meeting this increased demand. In Brazil, a mid-1990s regulatory change, which made it easier to set up private universities, resulted in skyrocketing growth, with student enrollment at private universities increasing by 3.8 million between 1990 and 2010, compared with only 1.1 million at public universities.

Public vs. Private Institution



Source: Ministry of Education

Online education is another vehicle for meeting increased demand for tertiary education — albeit a vehicle that challenged the seminar audience, with its large concentration of academics from traditional bricks-and-mortar institutions. The University of the People (www.uopeople.org), for example, a tuition-free online university, reaches out to those who cannot afford traditional tertiary education, relying on open-source technology, free online content, and 2,900 volunteer professors. It has offered business and computer classes to 1,500 students worldwide and hopes to expand to 5,000 by 2015.

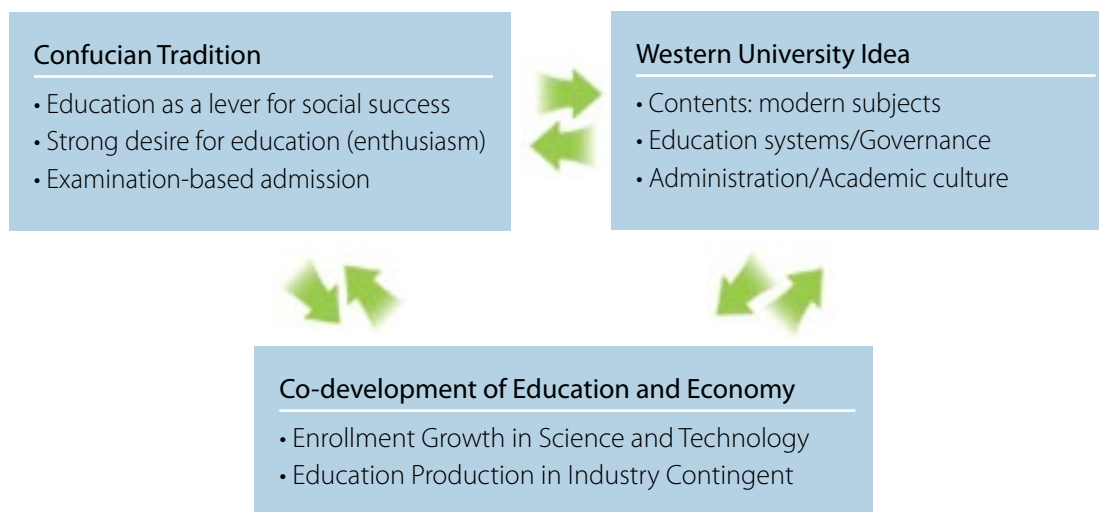
In 2010, DeVry Inc. hosted an educational policy forum in pursuit of efficiency, affordability, and quality in post-secondary education at which U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan was the keynote speaker. He said:

“Let me be crystal clear. [Private-sector] institutions play a vital role in training young people and adults for jobs, and they will continue to help families secure a better future for themselves. They are helping America meet the president’s 2020 goal and helping us meet the growing demand for skills that our public institutions cannot begin to meet alone, especially in these economically challenging times.”

University-based meritocracy

In South Korea, higher education is founded on Confucian traditions, shaped by the country's history and culture, and blended with western academic and economic principles. Traditionally, Korean higher education functioned as a meritocratic way of ensuring social mobility for the talented poor. But in recent years, as competition for university seats intensified, affluent parents began spending heavily on private tutoring for entrance exams, exacerbating social inequality and exclusion. To reinforce its tradition of social mobility, South Korea is attempting to promote equity in university admissions and intensify student support programs, to improve disadvantaged students' exam performance and thereby reduce educational inequality. Priority and quota systems for applicants from geographically and socioeconomically disadvantaged sectors should be sustained, and the student loan system should be strengthened.

Model of Korean Higher Education Development



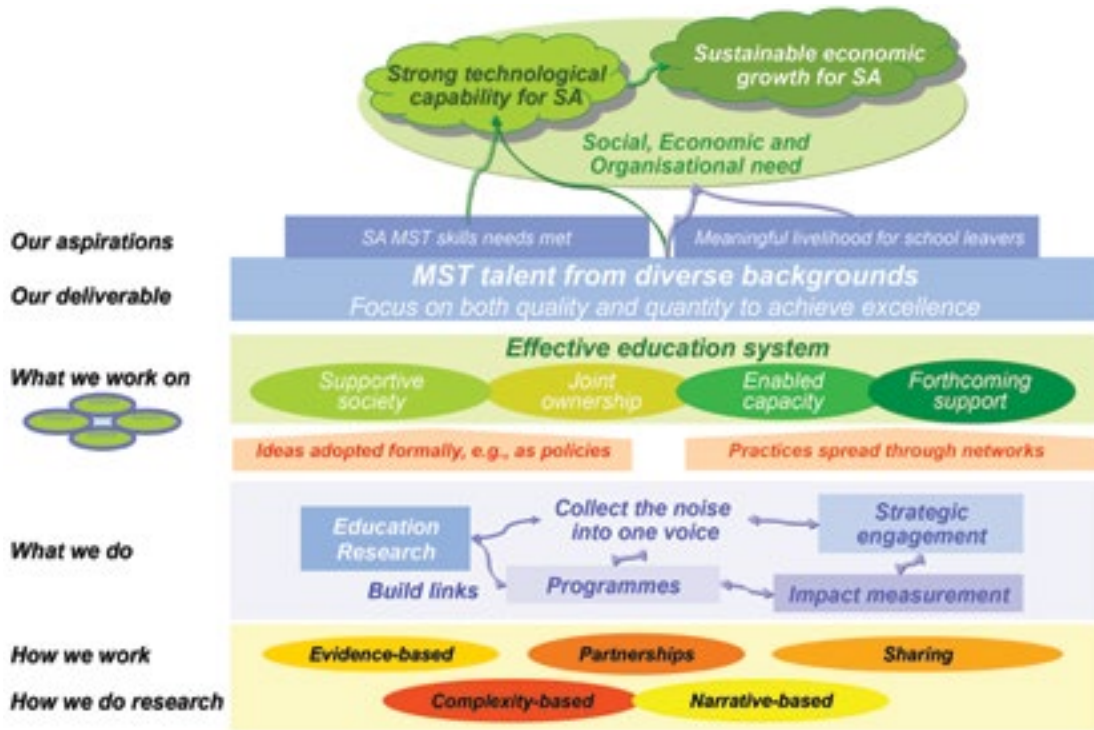
Source: Hi-Won Yoon, recently President for International Affairs and Director of the Centre for Multicultural Education, Seoul National University, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Reconceptualizing academic talent

Developing support services that help students adjust to university life, both academically and socially, is also a key element in improving higher education progression rates in South Africa. The Targeting Talent Programme (TTP) at the University of the Witwatersrand aims to raise graduation rates by improving performance patterns.

Among the project's strategies, which aim to increase student retention and academic success, are adopting a more flexible curriculum design; increasing the resources allocated to university student support programs; promoting the use of African languages in higher education; and taking account of disadvantaged learners' shifting identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

How we make a difference



Source: Zena Richards, Transformation Student Equity Project Manager, University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa

Sociological analysis

Research on access to higher education in the post-Soviet states highlights the role of the public sector in increasing access to higher education and promoting social mobility. If the public sector does indeed play an important role in this effort, then the implication is clear: human-capital theory and the conception of higher education as a market/quasi-market are misguided, and the educational privatization policies that spring from those mistaken ideas will limit educational access and social mobility, undermining the common good. An excessive focus on education’s economic function, with a concomitant emphasis on the development of only those skills that the labor market demands, neglects education’s role as “a developmental process of learning, gaining knowledge, experience, and skills.”

Tertiary Education Policy

Devising policies that will have real impact requires understanding what works and what doesn’t. Inequality is embedded in society, manifesting itself not only in education but also in many other areas; the barriers to progress can seem almost insurmountable. But although the work of dismantling those barriers is difficult, it is still essential. We may not win all of the battles, but that should not keep us from fighting.

“We should never give up on a just cause — however difficult it seems, however high the barriers.”

Among the policy strategies that emerged from the Global Seminar are these:

- Open the system to many kinds of lifelong learning. Post-secondary education is not just university education. To increase access, policymakers should develop and support many forms of further training, welcoming learners of all ages and rejecting the notion that students must be young. No one is too old to learn, but to accommodate non-traditional students, course scheduling must be flexible enough to meet an array of needs — full time, half time, quarter time; stretched over three, four, or five years; off campus or online.
- Avoid stratification that benefits elite institutions at the expense of others. The gap between the best and worst universities should be narrowed. Allowing a long tail of low-quality universities sustains inequalities.
- Consider revolutionizing student recruitment. Tertiary education should always be open to students from weaker schools or less privileged social backgrounds. Consider permitting the enrollment of students with lower grades.
- Encourage employers to take responsibility for supporting social mobility, in part by assisting all universities, not simply the most elite. Employers should provide trainee opportunities, internships, and apprenticeships, and universities should open up to employers.

Statement of the Global Student Leadership Summit

(London, 18–21 September 2012)

We are united in believing and asserting that education is a fundamental human right, public good and public responsibility. We maintain that this right must be assured primarily by governments through means of public funding. All relevant stakeholders (especially Education Providers) should work collaboratively to create and foster equal access and equal opportunity to education.

Access to education should be universal regardless of gender, ethnicity, nationality, socio-economic background, disability, political persuasion, religious and faith beliefs or sexual orientation.

Education plays many roles, including bestowing the ability to think critically, teaching tolerance and empathy, social and practical skills, the opportunity to obtain meaningful employment, participate in community development, as well as to simply expand a field of knowledge for universal benefit. Without these we cannot envision progressing towards a society that provides a high quality of life for all.

- Require the higher-education sector to support the development of high-quality primary and secondary schooling. Some higher-education ministers and institutions insist, “Not our problem — we live with what we get,” ignoring their responsibility for training teachers. Tertiary institutions also have an obligation to reach out to schools, especially secondary schools, to encourage learners to continue after graduation.
- Fund students fairly. Non-traditional students should be funded as generously as young people who study full time. A pro rata approach could be considered. Student financial support should be targeted at those who really need it, with rich parents paying up-front fees while poor parents do not. Policymakers must consider the burden of education debt on groups priced out of the labor market.

- Optimize teacher talent, because increasing learning opportunities means increasing access to good teaching. Educational systems should put more emphasis on teaching across the age spectrum, with a special emphasis on universities: professors need to teach undergraduates, or many young people will struggle and fail. Consider introducing value-added systems to evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of tertiary education. Such systems also give universities an incentive to accept weaker students. Identify the quality assurance and accreditation mechanisms that nurture good teaching. “For accreditation to be a mechanism for the optimization of teacher talent and, as a result, for raising student achievement, then two paradigm shifts are necessary: (1) away from inputs to outcomes and (2) away from accountability and compliance to formative assessment and institutional and programmatic improvement,” wrote conference speaker Deborah B. Eldridge, Senior Vice President, National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), in her paper “Optimizing Teacher Talent for Student Success: The Role of Quality Assurance for and Accreditation of Teacher Preparation.” Eldridge noted that “The first shift is away from the inputs that regulatory compliance dictates and toward defining and assessing the intended outcomes for student learning. The second shift is away from summative evaluations for accountability and compliance purposes and toward formative assessments of the intended learning outcomes for improvement purposes.”

	Quality Assurance Paradigm	Accreditation Paradigm
Strategic Dimensions		
Intent	Summative (Judgment)	Formative (Improvement)
Stance	External	Internal
Predominant Ethos	Compliance	Engagement
Application Choices		
Instrumentation	Standardized	Multiple/Triangulation
Nature of Evidence	Quantitative	Quantitative and Qualitative
Reference Points	Comparative or Fixed Standard	Over Time, Comparative, Established Goal
Communication of Results	Public Communication	Multiple Internal Channels and Media
Uses of Results	Reporting	Multiple Feedback Loops

- Focus on learning outcomes and the creation of portable qualifications, rather than on institutionalized learning. Articulated transparent qualifications are increasingly relevant, but when 140 countries have separate qualification systems, new issues of comparability, transparency, and transferability arise. If the future lies in skills-focused, rather than qualifications-focused, approaches, skills transferability will become essential, and the balance between supply-oriented learning and demand-oriented learning will shift toward the demand side. Traditional higher education will continue to have an important place, but as one choice in a system of lifelong learning — not the only choice.

European Training Foundation (ETF)

Source: Inform, May 2010

Employment and skills must be put at the heart of migration policy to ensure efficient labor mobility and all round success. The ETF does not promote migration per se, but supports the development of partner countries by helping to create virtuous circles in migration. Negative public opinion on migration both in sending (e.g., brain drain) and receiving countries (e.g., job loss, crime, violence) needs to be overcome by emphasizing the positive aspects. Migrants' skills and their assessment, certification, transparency and recognition have proved to be important for improved labor matching. Both sending and receiving countries must do more to ensure the transparency of migrants' skills and the recognition of their qualifications. Measures may include pilot actions to enable bilateral recognition of qualifications in priority sectors such as construction, agriculture or nursing. However, care must be taken that these actions do not remain isolated examples, but act as forerunners for a more systemic approach to making the most of migration. By turning the migration process into a virtuous circle, benefits can be considerably greater for all parties.

When the emphasis shifts from the needs of institutions to the needs of learners, new questions leap into focus. What do I know? What can I do? What behavior and attitudes do I need to develop? Where can I go to learn when I want new options? How do I know that what I learn has value in the labor market, or will prepare me for further learning? The problem of student mobility broadens: instead of traditional questions about horizontal and vertical mobility within and among universities, we must examine mobility from learning to work and back, and mobility associated with labor migration.

Next Steps

Two years ago, the SGS-ETS seminars began with three broad objectives:

1. Identify social mobility gaps and explain why they persist and even grow;
2. Develop strategies to increase social mobility; and
3. Create a vehicle to operationalize these strategies.

The two seminars that followed, in 2011 and 2012, were designed to facilitate inspirational exchanges of theories, best practices and success stories — highlighting the diversity in cultural, economic, and historical backgrounds, but anticipating that these differences would lead to enrichment rather than

fragmentation. It is easy to throw up our hands and decide that our situations are so different that “your” solution cannot work for “me.” But understanding one another’s solutions can make a big difference.

Finding the balance between “Why don’t we do the right thing if we already know what the issues are?” and “Daring to think the unthinkable.”

The plan is to implement the seminars' findings in three ways:

1. Addressing the themes of social mobility and achievement gaps during the upcoming series of World Congresses of Education;
2. Establishing resource pools and web communities composed of seminar participants to keep the process alive; to share success stories, strategies and best practices; and to track progress by leveraging formal and informal peer review; and
3. Forming global or regional pressure groups to inform and support advocacy and policy agendas.

Ultimately, the key problem is deciding who must be convinced that closing educational and social mobility gaps worldwide is of paramount importance — and then convincing them.

The 2011 seminar on basic education yielded a list of ideas organized into a cycle of innovation steps: Situation Analysis, R&D, Policy, Funding, Implementation, and Fact-Finding. At the end of the 2012 seminar, participants were asked to submit ideas for steps that could be taken internationally, nationally, and institutionally to advance equity in higher education.¹ Below are their ideas.

“We can all agree on the problems and the solutions, but we should be talking to the people who matter.”

International

- Engage the support of United Nations in order to have more collaboration and buy-in from countries across the globe.
- Promote equity indicators through an international advertising campaign.
- Reach out to the G-20 countries to create a global grant program for top students from underprivileged backgrounds to tour and enroll in universities around the world.
- Create a university ranking system that measures the value-added for students and replaces our current ranking system. The current system privileges institutions with ample resources and high-achieving students.
- Recognize the cultural diversity of nations and acknowledge “traditional” wisdom of indigenous people.
- Promote networks to exchange experiences and good practices across the world; create an international database.
- Create a mentoring network for teachers to create world-class teaching standards.
- Facilitate mobility of students to areas and regions where there is capacity for learning.
- Create international equity rankings of countries and institutions of higher education.
- Generate international messages around best practices for teaching and learning.
- Establish a code of best practices for online learning.
- Challenge ideological processes that undermine equity; champion equity worldwide.
- Identify corporate and philanthropic funding to support equity throughout the world; set up an educational funding clearinghouse.
- Capitalize on globalization for the common good in terms of opportunity and equity; set up a global fund for higher education equity (.1% of the GDP of all nations).

¹ The list of ideas has been summarized by Marybeth Gasman, Ph.D., Professor of Education at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education.

National

- Fund an equity task force within various nations.
- Promote equity indicators through an advertising campaign within various nations.
- Promote dialogue between various social sectors.
- Include anti-racist education in teacher training curriculum.
- Promote a national dialogue among teachers and discuss learning.
- Create more ethnically and culturally sensitive educational contexts.
- Develop policies for flexible learning paths.
- Create interventions to improve teacher training and accreditation for basic education.
- Improve articulations agreements between K–12 and higher education institutions.
- Increase data collection; evidence-based policy.
- Incorporate equity measures in teacher training programs.
- Recognize students' prior learning.
- Endorse a code of good practice.
- Hold institutions accountable for lack of equity.
- Provide development support and funding to create a climate of change.
- Share higher education outcomes at a political level.
- Use media to communicate educational lessons.
- Involve students in policy decisions.
- Develop equity-based and equity-enhancing funding approaches.
- Create better connections between higher education and employment.
- Require college faculty to have teacher training.
- Develop a research directory related to student success.

Institutional

- Empower student organizations to assist with retention.
- Increase data collection.
- Track individual student progress.
- Develop a narrative around non-traditional students.
- Consider individual differences in meeting student needs.
- Provide more student support services around learning.
- Support need-based financial aid.
- Increase financial literacy.
- Develop a platform for student voices on issues of student success.
- Provide support and mentoring for low-SES students.
- Encourage institutions to acknowledge their equity disparities.

This narrative has been assembled by Gerben van Lent of ETS Global, drawing on the papers and presentations delivered by faculty and on the contributions made by participants at the seminar "Optimizing Talent: *Closing Educational and Social Mobility Gaps Worldwide*." More details, including links to session lectures and podcasts, can be found at www.salzburgglobal.org/go/495.

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