Innovations in Thinking and Learning
Michael Fullan – The Challenges

MICHAEL: It's been easier than we thought, on the one hand, that given the nature of the deep change to think that deep change could happen within two or three years in the whole district is remarkable. So I think in that sense, we've been surprised by it. But the real problem, I would say, is a lot of people will endorse it in principle, but they won't necessarily have the skills and capacity as to know what implementation looks like. So that's the barrier. Sometimes, though -- one of our colleagues called it "Legacy pedagogy," I'm used to teaching this way, and now I don't know what the new way is doing. When I think of the new way, I lose control, and I feel vulnerable. And they don't always articulate it this way, but the blockage is know-how. And if you don't have the know-how, you don't fully -- you're not fully confident that it will work.

And so getting through this hump of support -- and this is why our change leadership is so important -- our change leadership basically says we need leaders who can reduce the fear of change, who can approach change as a learning proposition, co-learning. I'm a leader, I'm the principal. I'm going to learn with my teachers. So you want to reduce and create a climate of trust, and trying new things, and innovation and consolidating. So I think that getting into that, and getting comfortable with being uncomfortable is really what's necessary at the beginning. That's what you need for this to happen. And that's why it's a bit slower. We have accelerated it, because we use a system approach. So if we gained Hamel Dimension, they started with 15 schools, they have a total of 102, they've now expanded -- they started with the 15 to see what it was like, now they've expanded to all 102. Now, we have something like a whole district, the same with others we're studying. And when the whole district takes it on, there's a lot more mutual support.

So I think there are barriers about the know-how, the unknown, being uncomfortable in it. And then the other barrier, which is more fundamental, I would say -- and we're struggling with it, or dealing with it as an issue, is how do we measure the impact of this work? We are measuring -- in some ways, we are measuring the six Cs. We have in our model the learning progressions, which takes each of the six Cs and say, teaching this C, this is what it looks like when it's at the early stages, and these are the interim stages. And when you get to stage four fully developed, this is what it looks like. So we're helping teachers on the journey of progression from low levels of implementation to high levels of implementation. In the course of doing that, we're collecting what we call "exemplars," what does it look like when you're doing level four, which is the deepest level? And those will lead us to assessment. But everybody in the world, and this includes the 10 countries we're working in and the thousand schools, everybody in
the world is saying, well, how do -- we know the old measures. Either they're wrong, because they're too standardized and too punitive, or they're insufficient, like literacy and numeracy -- necessary, but not fully sufficient. Now we appreciate the six Cs, they say, but how do we assess them?

So all of us are moving towards that, including we have a close relationship with OECD, the people who do the PISA results and compare the 15-year-olds on science and math and literacy. They are meeting with us to help work on, what's the future in PISA if we were to measure these deep learning outcomes? We're co-doing this; they're at the policy level, we're at the practice level. And one other label I want to use here, because it's an important distinction -- this broad work has been called for, I don't know, 15 years or more, "Twenty-first century skills." They haven't really -- it's just all words. They've been 20 years of nothing, 15, 20 years of nothing, so that now that the twenty-first century skills, if you look at them closely, they tend to be the four latter ones, not character education and citizenship, but the other four. So that's the adding the other two, and then getting into new measurement. Here's my point: We want to replace, we are replacing the label, "Twenty-first century learning skills" with the label, "Global competencies," the six Cs are the global competencies of the present and the future for students now and for students when they become citizens.