CITATION FOR PROFESSOR MICHAEL FULLAN, OC

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION, honoris causa

Mr Chairman,

It is my honour to present Professor Michael Fullan for the award of the degree of Doctor of Education, honoris causa. Professor Fullan is a worldwide authority on education reform, with an objective of helping to achieve the moral purpose of all children learning. An innovative thinker highly sought after by institutions, publishers and international think-tanks alike, he advises policymakers and leaders around the world on educational change.

Professor Fullan is also a prolific writer, with a number of award-winning titles and numerous bestsellers, many of which have been translated into several languages. Throughout a distinguished career of more than four decades, including two and a half spent as a leading educator with worldwide influence, he has made enormous contributions to the advancement of education.

Currently Professor Emeritus at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto (OISE, UT), Professor Fullan served from 1988 to 2003 as the Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University, and then OISE, UT when the two institutions merged, where he played a leading role in a number of major organisational transformations.

In his capacity as Special Advisor to Dalton McGuinty, then Premier of Ontario, Canada and the Minister of Education in Ontario from 2003 to 2013, Professor Fullan drove and facilitated the system-wide transformation of the Ontario education system. As a result, the overall performance of the almost 5,000 schools in the province has improved dramatically in most key areas since 2003. According to independent expert assessment and international measures, Ontario is now recognised as one of the best school systems, often compared with outstanding systems around the globe, including those of Finland, Singapore and South Korea.

For his significant contributions to education, Professor Fullan has received Honorary Doctorates from Duquesne University in the US, the University of Edinburgh, Newman University College and the University of Leicester in the UK and Nipissing University in Canada. In 2012, he received the Order of Canada, one of the country’s highest civilian honours.

Born in Toronto, Ontario, Professor Fullan was, according to his biography, “the eldest of seven hockey-playing boys, and turned in his skates for books at the age of 18, and slowly worked his way into academia.” He completed his PhD in Sociology at the University of Toronto in 1969. He is the father of
five children all of whom went through the public education system in Ontario. He and his wife Wendy live in Toronto.

Today, Professor Fullan is engaged in training, consulting and evaluating change projects for a wide range of organisations, from global management consulting firms such as McKinsey to governmental units such as the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in Australia, and the government and many districts in California, USA, in addition to frequently speaking on educational reform to the media. His approach is to focus on “linking practice to theory, rather than the other way around”, working with groups at all levels of the system to ultimately raise the bar and close the gap of school achievement for all children. He is currently working on major international projects to integrate technology and pedagogy in support of new learning partnerships between and among students and teachers.

Professor Fullan’s work is based on research and practices drawn from both the public and private sectors, between which he is finding an increasing convergence – a theme frequently explored in his publications. Both as authoritative and inspirational references in education reform, his books have brought him multiple awards and widespread acclaim.

Tom Vander Ark, the first Executive Director of Education for the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, once commented that “at the very time the need for effective leadership is reaching critical proportions, Michael Fullan’s Leading in a Culture of Change provides powerful insights for moving forward. We look forward to sharing it with our grantees”. The highly acclaimed publication also won the 2002 Book of the Year Award by Learning Forward (formerly the National Staff Development Council) in the US.

Professor Fullan’s other award-winning books include, among others, Breakthrough (Book of the Year Award from the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, 2006), Turnaround Leadership in Higher Education (the Bellwether Book Award, 2009) and Change Wars (Book of the Year Award by Learning Forward, 2009). Continuing to receive enthusiastic responses from readers and critics alike, his recent publications include Professional Capital: Transforming Teaching in Every School (with Andy Hargreaves), Cultures Built to Last (with Rick Dufour), Stratosphere: Integrating Technology, Pedagogy, and Change Knowledge, Motion Leadership: The Skinny on Becoming Change Savvy, and his latest, The Principal: Maximizing Impact.

Hong Kong has also benefited greatly from Professor Fullan’s insight and scholarship. Here at the Institute, he served as one of four international advisors at the former Asia-Pacific Centre for Education Leadership and School Quality. As the then Centre Head from 1999 to 2007, I had had the pleasure of working with him through the Centre’s key initiatives.
For the past decades, Professor Fullan has regularly been invited as keynote speaker at conferences, seminars and workshops to discuss his extensive experience in education reform with local educational organisations. At the 13th International Congress for School Effectiveness and Improvement (co-organised by the Institute and other educational bodies in 2000) and the School Leadership and Sustainability Conference (upon invitation of the then Education and Manpower Bureau in 2004), Professor Fullan enlightened the participants with his inspirational keynote speeches. Discussing his experience in transforming Ontario’s education system, he shared with the local education community on the theories and practices on managing change and on the honing of skills in leadership and sustainability in a culture of school development and accountability.

Professor Fullan’s support was also enlisted by the then Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Qualification (ACTEQ) of Hong Kong. Leading a research team at OISE, UT in 1998, Professor Fullan’s project resulted in a report titled Consultancy for a Study on Establishing an Assessment and Reporting Framework to Enhance the Professional Relevance of Teachers’ Performance. The report findings provided ACTEQ with insights into reviewing different ways of enhancing teachers’ professional relevance in Hong Kong.

Throughout his illustrious professional career, Professor Fullan has consistently emphasised the key role of leaders in smoothing the path for change. In his view, ‘change-savvy’ leadership is crucial in delivering the system transformation that will equip students to thrive in the 21st century. As Hong Kong continues to drive change, Professor Fullan has been proposing new perspectives and thought-provoking ideas for our city’s education to move forward in the new era.

Mr Chairman, it is my pleasure and privilege to present Professor Michael Fullan, and request that you confer on him the degree of Doctor of Education, honoris causa.