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Intersections:
Teaching for the 21st century: Broader skills for global citizens

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(Music)

PITA: Welcome to Intersections, part of the Brookings Podcast Network. I'm your host, Adrianna Pita. Today's episode is looking at the transformation of education around the world to face the rapidly changing social, economic, and technological demands of the 21st century. My colleague Esther Care, senior fellow in our Center for Universal Education, will be guest-hosting a conversation with Sean Slade, the senior director for global outreach with the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and Ramya Vivekanandan, with UNESCO's Center for Asia-Pacific Regional Bureau for Education, as they look at the full breadth of skills needed to comprehensively prepare children, youth, and adults for 21st century citizenship and life. For more on this subject, you can find the proceedings of our Center for Universal Education's annual symposium available at brookings.edu/events.

Now, over to Esther.

CARE: Hello, I'm Esther Care from Brookings, and I'm here today with Sean Slade of ASCD and Ramya Vivekanandan from UNESCO Bangkok. So at Brookings, we've been looking at an emerging trend in education about the adoption of a much more explicit focus on the development of a broad range of skills for students in education, so through their formal education systems. The backdrop to this is that UNESCO, back in I think the last decade of last century, was proposing a new vision of education, and you may know this: learning to do, learning to be, learning to live together. And they've become a little bit closer to where we are now. The OECD published a very widely-read report in 2003 which focused on key competencies, and they classified those competencies in three broad groups. First of all was using a wide

range of tools so that people could interact much more effectively with other people and with the environment, so physical tools like ICT, information, communication, and technology tools; as well as sociocultural tools just like communication and language. There was also a focus on individuals being able to engage with others in a much more networked and interdependent world, and individuals taking much more responsibility for managing their own lives through situating themselves in that broader social context.

So coming right up to, I guess, the second decade of this century, we have the Assessment and Teaching in 21st Century Skills project, which was an international project that engaged about eight countries, and part of that project was identifying a framework for us to think about, what are the characteristics that we are going to value among students, among citizens, in the future? And in fact, those characteristics were about different knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and ethics. And within that particular project, I led some research work which focused on two skillsets: collaborative problem-solving and digital literacy in social networks. And those two skills have appeared relatively recently in our vocabularies, but what I'd like to talk about today is not only those more recent, 21st century-labeled skills, but skills that we now are more and more focusing on in education. And a lot of these skills we're valuing much more because of 21st century technologies and this whole thing about the world being—not a global village, but a global living space.

So what I'd like is if you could talk about the work that you were involved in that picks up on that recognition that education needs to be providing a much broader set of opportunities for the youth of today. So Sean, I'll throw it over to you first.

SLADE: Ok, thank you very much, and thank you for the invitation. For those of you who don't know well ASCD, we're a global education association based in Washington, D.C. in the U.S., and we're one of the largest ones in the U.S. and one of the—probably one of the largest ones globally, as well. We're in 130-odd countries. What's compelling about the new direction that education has been taking over the last 10-15 years, perhaps, is that it really fits with our philosophy of what an effective education, and a successful school, should be. Back in 2007, we refocused our attention to be dedicated to what we're calling a whole-child approach to education, so one that's taking far more interest in the social, emotional, mental, physical development of the individual as well as the cognitive development. Given that that was 2007, we're now in 2017, it's now 10 years since we launched that, and I should mention, most people are aware of U.S. policy in education globally, but that was really in the middle of the No Child Left Behind years when all of the emphasis around education was focused around standardized testing and annual, yearly proficiency and progress. And we jumped both feet first into this whole-child approach because we believed it was the right thing to do.

Going somewhat full circle, now in 2017, we're doing a relaunch of our work and we're recommitting ourselves at ASCD to this more whole-child approach, but we're doing it with a more global perspective. From this year onwards we'll be talking about Whole Child for the Whole World, which is really a campaign that we're doing at ASCD, but also in conjunction with some other organizations such as Ashoka, the Global Education Leaders' Partnership, Education International, UNESCO, UNICEF, and a number of others, which is really looking at developing students as whole people, but

also ones that are being developed to be stewards of the world and citizens of the world that they live in. So it's really taking the more global aspect and focusing on, as you were saying in the introduction, on some of those skills that we know our youth are going to need, not only today, really not only yesterday, but definitely moving forward into this century—so the skills of communication, of cultural competency, of problem-solving, of collaboration, of teamwork. So, again, going back to those, whether we call them dispositions and attitudes, or knowledge, or the skills around communication and seeing projects through to their end, and that really is—one, it's the focus of the work we're doing at ASCD, but it also seems more and more the focus of what ministries of education are looking at. We're moving away from seeing education as a content-delivery system, and it's more of a system which trains and develops people ready for society and to be lifelong learners as well.

CARE: It makes a lot of sense, and it really links with what education, I think, originally was conceptualized for. That is, it's about a development and a training ground for us to develop in children the skills, the competencies, the characteristics, the maturity that they need to move out into the world. The other thing I really like about that is the Whole Child for Whole World. I think it's a lovely, lovely phrase. So Ramya, does that, Whole Child for the Whole World, does that click with what's happening in your work in the Asia-Pacific?

VIVEKANANDAN: Thank you very much, Esther. Absolutely, and I think actually even beyond the Asia-Pacific. I mean UNESCO as a whole, well before the Delors report that you referred to was published in 1996, I think even in our Constitution itself, when UNESCO was established back in 1945, there's this central notion that—actually

there's a phrase that says that—"since wars begin in the minds of men and women, it's in the minds of men and women that the defenses of peace must be constructed." And across all of the sectors in which UNESCO works, which is education, culture, the sciences, and communication and information, it's this idea that all of this must serve peace, simply, and bringing people together across nations and across regions. So I think this is really central to the mandate of the organization, and then as you said, indeed, since 1996 we've been talking about the four pillars of learning and the idea that learning is not just about the cognitive and the knowledge, reading and writing and maths, but actually much more than that. And then I think more recently, with the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and specifically the SDG 4, which is focused on education and the Education 2030 agenda, it's a much more holistic sort of vision of education; whereas in the past, with the Education for All agenda, we were focused very much on issues of access, quality to a certain extent as well. But now it's actually looking at learning as a whole and looking at areas such as education for global citizenship, education for sustainable development, and actually all of the countries of the world adopting this agenda and are going to be working toward that.

So in the Asia-Pacific where I sit—so I'm based in the UNESCO office in Bangkok, but this is our Regional Bureau for Education for all of the Asia-Pacific region—we've seen, most definitely I think that when you look at many, many countries in this region, how they actually conceptualize education now, in terms of what's reflected in their vision and mission statements and their overall education policy. It's very much this idea that education has to contribute to empowering the whole child, to borrow the phrase of Sean's organization, and this is increasingly reflected, I think, in

the way that curriculum is structured and a lot of work that's been occurring in our region.

So actually starting in 2013, we started to become much more interested in this, and we leveraged a network that we coordinate called the Education Research Institutes Network, or ERINET, which is our acronym. But it's basically a network of universities and research institutions in the region that are working on education, and so working across a range of member institutions in several Asian-Pacific countries we tried to understand more about how these other areas of education, these other skills which some people call 21st century skills or noncognitive skills—we actually started using the term transversal competencies at that time—but we strive to understand, basically, in a series of studies, actually how these skills are reflected in educational systems. So the first phase of the research was very much focused on policy-level efforts, whereas the second phase looked more at school and teacher efforts and practices, and then thirdly, on the impacts on teacher development and training. And then more recently we worked through another network that we run called the Network on Education Quality Monitoring in the Asia-Pacific, which is a regional network on learning assessment issues actually, to look at the assessment side of the transversal competencies.

And I think as a whole we saw—like I said, that definitely at a high policy level—that countries are very much committed to reorienting, to a certain extent, their education systems to focus on things like problem-solving, being able to live and work with people from other cultures, communication, etc. In our part of the world, creative and innovative thinking and interpersonal skills were particularly the areas that seemed

to be emphasized, at least in the countries that were involved in our research. And I think the rationale behind that—there are many different drivers, but—it seemed that actually the economic discourse and the idea that if you focus on these areas you will produce learners who can be more successful in the job market, this was kind of the primary driver.

But what we saw is that even though there's sort of policy-level interest and commitment to reorienting education systems in this way, the actual how, in terms of, you know, how are these types of skills integrated in curriculum? How are teachers trained? Are they trained? Are they equipped? Are they supported to actually teach these areas? And then of course, you know, how do you assess things like creativity or problem-solving? These, I think, are the challenged in which we are very much interested in continuing to examine in the next few years, in terms of our work program.

CARE: Yeah, it comes across as an incredibly complex scenario. I mean, if we think about—Sean, you know, you're mentioning quite a few specific skills—you know, immediately the question arises, well, is there a particular set of skills that are more important than others? Is there a finite set? What do the skills actually look like? Are we actually talking about skills, or are we talking about values? Are we talking about attitudes? So, you know, at the moment we're in a phase, as Ramya says, where there seems to be a great deal of consensus about moving toward this more skills-focused education system, but there are many, many issues associated with making that shift to being much more explicit. And—I think Ramya, as you mentioned—we have issues of curriculum reform and review that are associated with this. We need to be rethinking whether particular sorts of pedagogical methods and strategies are better-suited to

teaching skills than the methods that we've used in the past to teach for content and knowledge. And we also need to think about, are there different approaches or methods of assessment that will help in the teaching of these skills?

So we know already that there are many countries that are moving on the curriculum reform and review process. For example we've seen Philippines, in 2013, really going into a big, what they called the K-12 basic education reform agenda. And that was not only about structural reform within the system, but also looking at the degree to which students were equipped to understand and to apply knowledge, rather than having a focus on content alone. We know that in Norway, for example, two to three years ago the Norwegian Parliament contracted for a group within the country to identify a new vision for the future of education for Norway. We have a country like Costa Rica, at the moment, that is working on their curriculum and a review of that according to the assessment and teaching of 21st century skills framework. So quite apart from that, we also see globally that this move is actually happening. So Sean, I'd like to pick up on a couple of issues here, and maybe if you can focus a little bit on the teaching issues here; and then Ramya, I'm going to move to you and maybe we can talk a little bit more about the assessment piece.

SLADE: Yeah.

CARE: Sean?

SLADE: Yeah, that sounds great. And one thing that strikes me as well is not the downplay some of the issues that are apparent, because yes, we will need to look at how we assess these skills. We will need to get consensus on what these attitudes and knowledge and skills are, although I do think, as Ramya was saying, that we are moving

along that path and we're getting there. We do need to look at teacher trainer courses as well, to help teachers coming out of universities to know how to teach this. And all of those things, if you start to stack them up, start to seem a little bit overwhelming. But what we need to remember is the current system we have is not working for the majority of students, or it's not reaching the potential that it could be, and the assessment systems and delivery systems we've had for at least the last 15-20 years are not teaching the skills that we know are going to be needed in this century. So it's just, playing a little bit of devil's advocate, we don't need to develop the perfect system in its entirety in order to make this shift, because what we are moving from, which has been a very strong focus on academics and content and fact-memorization for a long time, is not a system which has been perfect by any means. You know, I often say as well that, you know, in the U.S. we have been focusing a lot on standardized testing, and especially around literacy and numeracy. Now, there are studies out there that show that students who actually do well in those tests, even at leaving school-level, that is not indicative of their success at future life. And so I think we just need to remember that the system we've had previously has not been a perfect system.

But now going on to your question.

(Laughter)

SLADE: So when the issue that we need to look at—and we see this often, we see that we often talk about these things, these missions coming out from UNESCO or OECD or even ASCD, or reports coming out from Brookings, and they hit the mark—but you often see that these missions that are at a very high level don't often play out into the schools and into the classrooms, because there is a disconnect between what those

missions are and then what teachers have been trained to do, or what they believe they are expected to do, or what they are being evaluated on. So as we start to get more and more buy-in about these skills, the conversation is starting to come down to the teacher level and the classroom level. But there is still a gap there. Two things that we recommend from ASCD: one is, we need to keep the conversation going amongst teachers, and especially classroom teachers, about what the role and the purpose of education is, because I think that's been sullied a little bit over the last couple of decades. We need to remind them that they are developing youth ready for society, and a global society. And, as people who have heard me speak will know, I'm a strong believer that if you change the mindset of a person, then their actions will change accordingly.

The second thing is, how do we start to develop some of these skills and attitudes in teachers? One thing we are launching this year at ASCD is a globally-competent learning continuum, which is a free online tool which outlines the twelve dispositions or attitudes, knowledge and skills, many of the same things that we've been talking about previously in terms of developing empathy and promoting equity, cultural competency, collaboration. But it's designed not for the students; it's designed for the teachers. So it's a continuum for them to move along in order to almost retrain or redevelop their own skills around these competencies that we're saying are now so important, because if you were a teacher, as I was, trained back in the late 80s, early 90s, you were not trained in these core competencies. You may have developed them intuitively as you went through five, ten, fifteen years of classroom experience, but you were not trained on them. And at least in the U.S. over the last decade, we have not

had many teacher-trainer colleges that have been developing these skills. One, how to teach them, but also how to recognize and observe them as well.

And so I think this is going to be the next step, where we need to actually start to go back into schools with professional learning, in-service training, and start to provide not only the words and the mission about what we're talking about, but to start to show some more concrete examples about how teachers can infuse this back into the work that they're currently doing, as opposed to stopping what they're doing and trying to get retrained and restart something completely different.

CARE: Yeah. You've been saying that the teachers are not being trained in those core competencies, and therefore are not-well equipped for the shift. And so if we move that conversation around to what does this also mean for the competencies of the teachers in using assessment to promote the skills, are there any parallels, Ramya, for you in the Asia-Pacific and the work you've been doing?

VIVEKANANDAN: Yes, so actually we started looking at this issue of assessment of the transversal competencies or 21st century skills because in the other work we had done, looking more at the policy-level and the curriculum, we saw that there was really a disconnect between, like I mentioned, these vision and mission statements that really talk about, you know, cultivating these skills and competencies, and even curriculum to a certain extent, like you mentioned the case of the Philippines and others that have actually made a concerted effort to shift, you know, the integration of these areas into the curriculum. And yet, assessment systems that, in our view, according to our hypothesis were still quite traditional in terms of from a measurement perspective, particularly when you look at things like high-stakes exams or even

national assessments, that didn't, you know, necessarily cover these areas. So—which was why we launched, actually, the study specifically looking at the assessment of the transversal competencies, and it was basically nine countries in our part of the world that participated in this: Australia, Hong Kong, China, India, Korea, Malaysia, Mongolia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam. So obviously a very diverse set of countries, but we were interested in looking at assessments both at the system level, in terms of whether—national assessment frameworks and sort of, you know, the national conversations going on around assessment—whether transversal competencies featured there; but also sort of school-level, by actually going down to a certain number of schools and talking with teachers and school leaders and other stakeholders as to their understanding of this.

And we saw that, you know, indeed—of course, it varied greatly from country to country—but indeed there seemed to be a policy, systemic sort of commitment to reconceptualizing assessment to a certain extent, to think about ways to also cover these areas, but then I think it was more—at the school level, as you mentioned in terms of teachers and what is their role in all of this—where teachers didn't necessarily—they were very committed, I think. Most of the teachers who were part of the study in these countries, they're very committed to the idea, they recognize that of course these skills and competencies are important and this is part of my role as a teacher, but of course they felt challenged in terms of how do I, in addition to teaching, you know, reading and maths and science and everything else that I have to do—so as Sean was saying, how do I actually, in my teaching, in my everyday practice, how do I incorporate, you know, also thinking about problem-solving or creativity or innovation?

But then in terms of assessment, they didn't feel, in most cases, that they had had training or support to actually know how to assess these areas, certainly not, I think, from an initial teacher education perspective. I think pre-service teacher education in most countries in our region is still quite traditional in terms of, you know, not necessarily thinking about assessment of other areas, but then also in terms of access to tools and instruments that they could use, you know. Some of them in some countries sort of went about finding things on their own initiative, actually, to think about how they could actually assess their students in these areas, but then there is a real, sort of, gap in terms of systemically really knowing how to do that.

And so I think there's a conversation that we need to have around, certainly, both large-scale learning assessments and exams and thinking about how we can look at, you know, how these sort of traditional measurements can actually also move into covering these areas; but then of course assessment is not just exams and large-scale assessments, it's what happens every day in the classroom. Teachers every day are assessing whether or not their students are learning. So it's also thinking about what can we do in terms of supporting them with other types of assessment strategies that they can use in the classroom, whether it's something like performance assessment or folio assessment or—I think there's a lot of innovative approaches actually out there, but it's perhaps just a matter of, you know, bringing all those together and particularly in some of the low- and middle-income countries of our region, thinking about how we can really support access and training and particularly capacity building around that for teachers.

CARE: Yeah, I think as I've been listening to you, I've been thinking more and more about the fact that many of these difficulties, I think, come down to the fact that we don't really understand a great deal about the nature of the skills yet, and maybe this is true for the teachers. And so if you don't really understand fully what it is that you're teaching or needing to assess, then of course it's very, very, difficult to go about those processes with students. And I know from our work here at Brookings over the last year, as well as the work that Ramya, you've been doing around transversal competencies, the biggest challenge that seems to have emerged out of this in terms of affecting the shift is this lack of knowledge about the skills. It's a lack of understanding about how they develop. So if we think about something like—whether it's collaborative problem-solving or whether it's creativity—although we might all have some understandings about what those words mean, we don't necessarily have the same understanding of what they look like in their sort of infantile state, maybe, or in their very beginning or their basic states. We don't necessarily have a great understanding of what this might look like in a child who's five years old who's reasonably precocious, or an eight-year-old who's sort of fairly normal for their age, whatever normal might be.

And so if we don't really understand the learning progression of these skills, then we don't necessarily understand how we can nurture them or how we can develop them well in our students. And that knowledge is essential, it seems to me, if teachers are going to integrate the teaching and learning of the skills within curricula or cross-curricula. Teachers need to understand how they might go about modeling some of the skills in classrooms, because again, we're talking about, as we move to a focus on how you demonstrate your understanding and how you apply skills, we're looking for really

active pedagogies in the classroom, and that means that the teachers need to be modeling these things in the classroom. And so again, Sean, you know, you were talking about being trained as a teacher decades ago, and maybe some of those much more interactive pedagogies were not really part of the suite of tools that teachers in those days were led into.

So if we look at the Brookings work, where we've done this large-scale mapping of countries, over a hundred countries worldwide, to look at whether countries are identifying an aspiration for students to be equipped with these skills, we can't, in public documents at least, find evidence of integration within the curriculum quite frequently. We can't find evidence of articulation of the development of the skills through different grade levels. And then I know, Ramya, in your work with UNESCO Bangkok, you've also found that many teachers have said they need more provisional development in both how to teach and how to assess the skills. So from both those sets of evidence, my take is that the lack of understanding of the nature of the skills is one of our absolutely biggest challenges. So I'd like to have your views on that, and whether you think there actually—are there bigger challenges than this, you know? What's the thing that's right in front of us now that we really need to come at?

SLADE: Yeah, I tend to agree. I think the lack of examples, the lack of, say, common understanding in the schools themselves is the biggest hurdle. Because you've had people who have been trained, who have been rewarded, who have been promoted, with a certain skillset around teaching, and all of a sudden we're making a fairly monumental shift to say those things are less important than they used to be, and these other skills are going to end up being a lot more important. Now these are people

that may not even recognize some of those skills in themselves. So that's an issue. However, what we need to realize is that even if we haven't been articulating that problem-solving and perseverance and teamwork and collaboration, even if those things have not been cited as important in years past in the classroom, teachers have still been doing those things. We actually do those things every single day in every walk of life and in our social space as well. So it's more of shining a spotlight on what these things are and when they've been occurring. I'm a strong believer in the more we can get teachers collaborating, sharing, networking with each other, it makes a far more safe space where they can showcase, see peers doing similar things. It's a great way forward.

But I was jotting down a few notes as you were speaking. I think one thing we need to realize in what's occurring right now is we are going through a fairly monumental change in the articulation of why we have schools and what we want our students to do and act and feel and respond to when they leave. This is—and so if you look at change theory, about how you change vast populations of people, there was an author that I read and you've probably read it as well, Chip and Dan Heath's book *Switch*, out a couple of years ago. And he used the analogy of when you're trying to make monumental change, he had the elephant and the driver analogy, that you need to get the elephant moving. The elephant is your gut reaction, the emotion, the rationale, the reason. And once you get that elephant, the understanding of why you need to change, moving, it's actually hard to stop it because you buy into it. But if that's all you ever do, is inspire that emotion and don't have it directed in going somewhere, that elephant can go anywhere. And so the driver is the one that actually starts to

showcase where you want to go, and here are examples, and this is what you need to do. So I think, from a—taking a little bit of a step back, this is a change theory process that we're going through. We need to keep on talking to teachers about why this needs to happen at an emotional level, on why they need to consider it. But then we need to start providing examples about what they can do tomorrow as a first, second, or third step, or what they can do along the continuum. That's the driver, that's the showing where they can use this energy and use this purpose. And I think we sometimes fail to do both of those things. I think sometimes we give too much specific direction, examples; or we give too much emotional talk without then proving the examples about how you can put this into practice.

And so I think we're doing fairly well on the mission, the why. It needs to be continued, but I think those examples that teachers need to see on, yes I agree with it, yes I can probably understand how I've been doing this to a certain extent in my classroom for a number of years, but I need some precise examples about how I can do this in my social studies, how I can do it in my language class, how I can do it in my mathematics class or STEM classes or whatever; because we sometimes have this innate barrier to thinking we can make those changes. So that's another long way of answering the question that I think I agree with what you were saying.

(Laughter)

CARE: Yeah, it's interesting because I was talking about, you know, what is the big challenge? But I also was thinking as you were talking that, you know, we often in discussion talk about what are the challenges, but maybe a better way of us talking

would be to talk about what are the drivers and the how. Because, I mean, that really does seem to be the big issue at the moment. You know, what is our next step?

SLADE: One last comment. There is one certainty, and that is this is going to happen. You know, we are going to move down this path. That elephant is already moving, and this is the way that schools are going to move and change too. The question is how do we then bring everybody along as quickly as possible, with the least amount of frustration and pain as possible?

CARE: Yeah. Ramya, what do you reckon?

VIVEKANANDAN: Yeah, I mean I think in my mind there's maybe about three things that—I don't know if I would use the word challenges, either, but—let's say opportunities, perhaps. So I think one, absolutely this issue of the understanding that we have about how these skills develop, and you know, the progression that occurs and the fact that yeah, something like creativity or innovation, what does that mean for a five year old versus a fifteen year old. So I think one interesting thing that UNESCO has produced as a resource, a few years ago, was actually a document, a publication on global citizenship education, on the topics and learning objectives for global citizenship education, which actually tried to break down as per different domains the cognitive, the social, emotional, and the behavioral, and actually sort of gave a clear guidance as to, you know, what you can talk about with lower primary—pre-primary, lower primary age groups versus upper primary, lower secondary, upper secondary. So for example, maybe for a five or six year old, it's more about thinking and talking about who are their neighbors, who are living in their village, and how might they be different from them? Whereas maybe with a ten year old you can maybe start talking about the United

Nations. So it really give like very concrete guidance in terms of how to move. So I think that's something that we could consider doing for other areas as well, perhaps as an international community of different stakeholders that are engaged in this work. I think that would be quite exciting.

I think another thing that we've always talked about is this issue of the balance between teaching and learning vis-à-vis all these areas and then what we call the foundational skills, the reading, the writing, the maths, the science. I mean, they shouldn't be opposed, actually in my view, because, you know, through learning the subjects, you know, we should be able to also teach the skills, but what exactly is that balance, I guess? And of course, in many countries including here in the U.S. but certainly in the Asia-Pacific region, teachers, principals feel that they are overloaded, that they don't have enough time in the school day to cover the existing curriculum. So how do you integrate all of this?

Another interesting thing that comes to my mind is just what is actually the role of schools and education in all of this, in developing and cultivating these competencies vis-à-vis, say, the parents or the community? Because we can, going back to global citizenship education, of course, you know, in a school you could be learning about all these concepts and principles, but maybe at home you're getting very different messages. You're being taught to, actually, to hate your neighbor, you know. So that to me is also an interesting sort of thing to think about, is just, you know, what is the role of education and how do we actually bring in the other stakeholders, you know, the community, the parents, and employers? And how do we all sort of move forward?

But I think as Sean said, this is very much happening. You know, all over the world this is a shift that's occurring in education. So even though these are some big questions and there are challenging questions, I think it's also a really exciting time to be working in education and to be witnessing this shift and to be supporting that. So I feel optimistic, generally speaking.

(Laughter)

CARE: That's lovely. I think one of the things I recall over the last few days is several people talking about skills begetting skills. And that really goes to that point of we're not putting aside the basic skills, that we believe and know they're important. So notwithstanding the factual, you say that literacy and numeracy are not necessarily indicators of success, they're skills that may be heard of for many people. And then we just go to the fact that we are in a time of change, and in terms of this role of education, it's natural that in times of major shift there'll be tensions. But I think you're quite right, I mean, the elephant is one analogy. For me, I've been thinking about it as a tsunami because, you know it builds and you can't see it? It's happening under the water? The reality is now, that it is starting to emerge. People can see this. It's not just a ripple any longer. We can sort of see this current rising. We can see it globally, and we can see it in our discourses. And I guess, as it becomes more and more visible, then I guess some of these tensions, some of these different understandings about what education is there for, will have to adjust to it, and hopefully will do that before the tsunami breaks.

(Laughter)

PITA: Thanks to Esther, Sean, and Ramya for joining us today. For more on this subject you can find the report, "Skills for a changing world: National perspectives and

the global movement,” as well as the full video of the symposium, at [brookings.edu](https://www.brookings.edu). And you can also follow us @policypodcasts. Thanks for listening!

(Music)