

A–Z Compendium: Volume one Influential leaders in education upon whose shoulders we stand

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In a recent¹ Sydney Morning Herald article *A true man of the people: why Jim Stynes is a hero*, Martin Flanagan referred to the poet Les Murray who wrote: “Men must have legends, else they will die of strangeness.” In the article Flanagan began by saying:

“As I understand the philosophy of Jim’s charity, Reach, it is based on the idea of the hero articulated by American author Joseph Campbell. His thesis was that the story of the hero is common to all cultures – that is, it represents something universal in the subconscious of humankind. As Campbell interpreted the hero story, it was not about personal glory. It was about aspiring to some notion of human wholeness – or, as I once saw it put, about being comfortable and confident in both the inner and outer worlds.

He went on to say that Jim Stynes “was on about...helping young people to be their best, to be as good as they can be... he gave them ‘a code for living’.”

Flanagan argued that while “people say the process whereby hero status is accorded to certain individuals and not others is unfair... when we enter the world of myth and heroes, we stand outside the rational domain or at its very edge.”

It is the same in education. Arguably, we need heroes who take us out of our strangeness in our profession; who aspire (and inspire) us to pedagogical wholeness, and who nurture in us the capacity to be the best we can be in our learning spaces (classrooms).

Who are our learning heroes?

Glenn Capelli’s, in his blog,² *Thinking Caps*, reminds us;

“I love folk who set the example of lifelong learning; the Learning Heroes who continue to dedicate themselves to the art, science and fun of their craft. Whether we are eighteen or eighty our talents are a gift and it is our duty to discover them, believe in them, develop them and use them well.”

Who are your learning heroes? What are your gifts? How have you developed them over the years of your teaching?

Interestingly, like the late Jim Stynes, the impetus in my journey has also been the work of Joseph Campbell, the father of Mythology who in his iconic book, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, (49:3) wrote:

“A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man”.

In my leadership and teaching I have been inspired by many 20th and 21st century educators. These learning heroes have ventured forth and have come back from their mysterious pedagogical adventures to inspire generations of teachers to dream of what learning can be, and what indeed it is, in some places! These heroes have become the shoulders on which I stand. They have transformed my teaching and have forever, unbeknown to them, etched their passion, love of learning and critical thinking into the lives of my students.

At times for teachers their knowledge of these educators can be tangential to their teaching. By exploring their contributions we not only enrich our teaching but more importantly the learning of our students.

Buoyed by my experience in Term Four last year when I published an article in *Education Today*, called: *An afternoon of insight and sharing of teaching and learning strategies* I have developed another booklet called: *A–Z Compendium: Volume 1 Influential leaders in education upon whose shoulders we stand*.

The previous booklet explored how the College was engaged in afternoons in the sharing of effective strategies for senior teachers in the classroom using the framework of John Hattie and the Harvard Ground Zero project. The initiative of sharing this booklet with the broader educational community was well received with many different sectors in many different states, both regional and urban, receiving a copy of the booklet (emailed on request).

How to use the booklet (Extracts taken from pp. 1)

The Compendium lists 32 influential educators essentially from A to Z. The two pages dedicated to each person have the following:	
The heart of their work	A brief synthesis of their key focus (in bold)
Context	Biographical information
Nurturing the mind	Suggested readings
4 Things to remember	Significant quotes or ideas that frame their thinking
Adjusting your sails for the journey	Questions for individual or group reflection and discussion
Further exploration	Recommendations to visit either a Website, YouTube clip, Facebook site or Twitter page

The intention of this booklet is for teachers to either ‘dip in and out’ of or read strategically in a cooperative learning mode. Either way, the hope is that the collection will lead teachers onto further reading and reflection and capture their imagination in their teaching and learning.

The essence of the Compendium is captured in the words of Jimmy Dean whose sentiments are found in the *Questions for individual or group reflection/discussion*: “I cannot change the direction of the wind, but I can adjust my sails to always reach my destination.”

Four things to remember

- 1 If you’re not prepared to be wrong, you’ll never come up with anything original.
- 2 The fact is that given the challenges we face, education doesn’t need to be reformed – it needs to be transformed. The key to this transformation is not to standardize education, but to personalise it, to build achievement on discovering the individual talents of each child, to put students in an environment where they want to learn and where they can naturally discover their true passions.

My 32 Learning Heroes found in the Compendium

A	Julia Aitkin
B	Paul Black, Benjamin Blooms
C	Guy Claxton, Glen Capelli
D	Joanne Deak, Edward De Bono, John De Courey
F	Michael Fullan, Robyn Fogarty
G	Loretta Giorcelli, Howard Gardiner, Francoys Gagné
H	John Hattie, Stephen Harris, Andy Hargreaves
J	Heidi Hays- Jacobs
K	Kouzes and Pozner,
L	Terry Lovat
M	Erika McWilliams, Andrew Martin
N	Alan November,
P	Daniel Pink, Marc Prensky
R	Ken Robinson, Ken Rowe
S	Leonard Sax, Peter Senge, Martin Seligman,
T	Mark Tredwell,
V	Lev Vygostgky
W	Bruce Wilson

- 3 Creativity is as important as literacy. Imagination is the source of every form of human achievement. And it's the one thing that I believe we are systematically jeopardising in the way we educate our children and ourselves.
- 4 Our task is to educate their (our students) whole being so they can face the future. We may not see the future, but they will and our job is to help them make something of it.

Adjusting your sails for the journey

- 1 Identify a poor lesson you have taught, and which you have learnt from. How did students then benefit when you retaught this lesson?
- 2 What value do you and your school place on personalized and transformative education?
- 3 What role does creativity play in your teaching AND learning?

Further exploration

<http://sirkenrobinson.com/skr/buzz-tweets>
http://blog.ted.com/2010/05/24/bring_on_the_re/
<http://www.facebook.com/people/Ken-Robinson/1254553526>
<http://twitter.com/SirKenRobinson>
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iG9CE55wbtY>

Weaving the treads together

At the end of the Compendium there is a chapter that explores the process of change which Walter Brueggemann calls the Divine Pedagogy. The chapter also alludes to other key people that have shaped and framed my teaching and learning, hopefully for a future volume. Finally the last chapter cross-references the key areas in education to each of the people in the compendium. This may be a useful tool when teachers need to access information quickly. Below are these last two chapters to help you ascertain whether you could use this as useful reference, or teaching activity with your staff.

Chapter 3

*“What a tapestry you weave,
 Calling us beyond our aloneness and security, definitions and boundaries to be surprised by
 miracles of the textures now to come – oh if we could but perceive”.*
 (From the poem Weaver God)

An example from the Booklet

(Extracts taken from pp. 52–53)

A two page example from the compendium which details one person, Sir Ken Robinson, is found below to give you a feel for the nature and intent of the booklet.

Sir Ken Robinson

Sir Ken Robinson, PhD is an internationally recognised leader in the development of education, creativity and innovation.

**The heart of his work:**

Creativity and Innovation

Context Sir Ken Robinson is one of the world's leading speakers. He works with governments in Europe, Asia and the USA, with international agencies, Fortune 500 companies and some of the world's leading cultural organizations. In 1998, he led a national commission on creativity, education and the economy for the UK Government. *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* (The Robinson Report) was published to wide acclaim in 1999.

For twelve years, he was professor of education at the University of Warwick in the UK and is now professor emeritus. He has received honorary degrees from the Rhode Island School of Design, Ringling College of Arts and Design, the Open University and the Central School of Speech and Drama, Birmingham City University and the Liverpool Institute for Performing Arts.

He has been honored with the Athena Award of the Rhode Island School of Design for services to the arts and education; the Peabody Medal for contributions to the arts and culture in the United States, the LEGO Prize for international achievement in education, and the Benjamin Franklin Medal of the Royal Society of Arts for outstanding contributions to cultural relations between the United Kingdom and the United States.

In 2005, he was named as one of *Time/Fortune/CNN's* 'Principal Voices'. In 2003, he received a knighthood from Queen Elizabeth II for his services to the arts. He speaks to audiences throughout the world on the creative challenges facing business and education in the new global economies.

Nurturing the mind

Out of our minds: learning to be creative (Capstone/Wiley 2011)

The element: how finding your passion changes everything (Penguin/Viking 2010)

The 3 gurus: live in London (CD-Audio- 2005)

<http://edition.cnn.com/2009/OPINION/11/03/robinson.schools.stifle.creativity/index.html>

All our futures: creativity, culture and education 1998 @ <http://sirkenrobinson.com/skr/read>

In our learning we are the loom. The many threads like change and pedagogy, once woven together provide a rich tapestry in our learning spaces.

It is such a privilege to be able to learn with, and from, our colleagues, students and parent community. One constant in this changing profession is that relationship is at the heart of learning. And, as is often quoted, at the heart of education is the education of the heart.

There are many more 'educational heroes that continue to inspire and frame my teaching. Perhaps there may be a second volume that would pay homage to the likes of *Hedley Beare, Frank Crowther, Frank Crawford, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Paul Dillon, Steve Dinham, Paulo Freire, Andrew*

Fuller, Daniel Goleman, Michael Carr Greg, Stephen Heppell, Ian Hickie, Ian Jukes, Mary Kalantzis, Hugh McKay, Maria Montessori, Robert Marzano, Jean Piaget, Donna Prendergast, Susan Ground Water-Smith, Rudolf Steiner, Peter Vardy, and Margaret Wheatley.

Who are your educational heroes?

Walter Brueggemann's learning cycle – “the divine pedagogy” provides a bookend to that of Joseph Campbell in Chapter One. This pedagogical cycle can be seen as a quest, an odyssey that consists of three stages.

- 1 Secure Orientation where we are secure and it is 'business as usual';
- 2 Disturbing Disorientation where we encounter pain, disruption and upheaval; and
- 3 Surprising Re-Orientation where we are transformed into new life.

It is by entering the abyss (stage 2) that we can be transformed into a new way of thinking and a new way of doing (step 3). This cycle happens over and over again in our lives and it is no different in our teaching and learning. It is a wonderful adventure.

Chapter 4	
Area	Page Numbers
Assessment	4
Brain research	12, 20, 62
Change (including systems)	18, 32, 46, 58
Curriculum development	38, 62, 66
Curriculum integration	20, 34
Creativity (innovation)	8, 10, 14, 30, 50, 52
Data analysis	16
Disabilities (students with)	22
Gender	14, 56
Gifted and talented	26
Leadership	18, 36, 40, 58
Learning (pedagogy)	2, 8, 10, 20, 24, 40
Learning spaces	30
Literacy	34, 54
Motivation (engagement)	42
Positive psychology	60
Teaching	16, 28, 50, 54
Technology	44, 48
Thinking (cognitive development)	2, 6, 10, 14, 50, 64
Values education	38

Final reflections

During this process I had the opportunity to 'road test' the Compendium with both experienced and new scheme teachers. I was heartened by their comments and indebted for their suggestions which I have included in subsequent drafts.

This project sits nicely beside two other initiatives I am currently engaged in: an online Harvard course – Teaching for Understanding (TFU) and introducing the concept of agile or flexible learning spaces into the College.

I say sits nicely beside because they serve as a powerful reminder that as a leader of teaching and learning all the initiatives I am involved in are really a prism for creating informed educational communities which speak a common language of student engagement while nurture learning partnerships between teachers, students and parents. And whether it is exploring technology, agile or flexible learning spaces or the work of prominent educationalists, without having students at the heart of learning much of what I do would be largely meaningless and ineffective.

There are steps being taken by various jurisdictions and individuals to break down barriers in sharing the 'marrow' of teaching and learning between colleagues. But much more can be done. Schools, particularly in regional Australia, are crying out for effective conversation and leadership in this area.


This Compendium hopes to add to this conversation, albeit in a very small manner.

We all have a responsibility to colleagues in our educational community that extend beyond the state/religious, primary/high school and gender lines that in some way divide us. Furthermore we are not defined by these differences but by the love of learning and passion which attracted us into this noble profession in the first place and the quest to make a difference in the lives of the students we are privileged to work with.

References


SMH article: A true man of the people: why Jim Stynes is a hero by Martin Flanagan March 31, 2012

Thinking Caps: Age Shall Not Weary Them – Life Long Learning WEDNESDAY, JUNE 16, 2010 <http://sirkenrobinson.com/skr/>

A Copy of the A-Z Compendium: Volume 1 Influential leaders in education upon whose shoulders we stand is available by emailing: jmuskovits@msben.nsw.edu.au 



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