

SIR KEN ROBINSON has an impressive résumé. He's been knighted by Queen Elizabeth II in recognition of his contribution to the arts, written international best-sellers, been recognised as a world-renowned thinker on creativity and received the most views of any TED speaker.

In May, Robinson reached another milestone – he became a grandfather for the first time. While this title doesn't come with ceremonies or awards, it does provide a special kind of introspection about the world the next generation will grow up in – and ultimately help shape.

Robinson says that like all newborns, his granddaughter is a "bundle of possibilities", and he expects her to exhibit the same high level of curiosity as all children. However, Robinson believes the reliance by many school systems on standardised testing and 'top down' teaching has been stifling curiosity – and with it, creativity.

Envisioning his own ideal education system, Robinson believes schools should teach "based on what it is that impels people to learn, encourages them to do it and gives them the tools and techniques so they can do it".

"The starting point is keeping the flame of curiosity alive," Robinson tells *The Educator*.

"That means not just telling kids stuff but asking them questions and setting them on the track where they'll want to find things out. It doesn't mean that we leave them to discover everything themselves, but if they're not impelled to learn, it's a tremendous impediment to them learning anything."

Robinson says that to help students

"Creativity, properly conceived, is a set of skills, as well as dispositions and practices. So one of the ways in which school leaders can facilitate creativity is by understanding what it is, how it works and making those conditions available."

Robinson points out that creativity also requires a different approach to teaching.

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harness creativity, school leaders must recognise that creativity is articulated with other competencies, such as collaboration, compassion, cooperation and personal composure.

"Principals must also realise that there are misconceptions around creativity," he says. "Often, people think creativity is just about the arts – it's not. It is the arts, but it is everything. It's not just about letting go, kicking your shoes off and doing whatever you want.

"Teaching isn't just instruction – it's about creating conditions for learning," he says. "It's about mentoring, coaching, inspiring and all the above. We've accepted the importance of literacy, and we have techniques and strategies to promote that are still contended. However, if school leaders are serious about creativity, they should get serious about it and understand how it really works, as well as the skills and resources teachers need to make it happen."

Testing times

Robinson says that amid talk from policy-makers about taking education 'back to basics', there are two important questions that deserve special attention.

"First, what do we want our children to learn and why, and second, what is it that makes them want to learn in the first place? If we get those conditions right, we'll have ideal learning environments," he says.

Robinson believes today's schools often include "habits, rituals and types of behaviour which do not cultivate the capacity or the interest in learning ... We divide the day up into particular segments; we separate disci-

job to have done."

A double-edged sword

Even though Robinson refers to his own computer as "a glorified typewriter", he does see tremendous potential for the role of technology in education.

"One of the ways in which technology can be a fantastic aid and assistance to the transformation of education is through the better organisation of time," he says. "One of the great restrictions on innovation in schools is the tyranny of the timetable. That's partly because we've gotten used to try to schedule everything once a year in blocks."

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plines out; we educate kids by age group, which is a completely unnatural thing to do, because learning often happens on a different rhythm and type of timeframe," he says. "The current way schooling is structured has nothing to do with learning – it's an organisational device in the interests of efficiency."

In the 1990s, Robinson chaired a major commission for the British government on creativity and education. He says some of this report is mirrored in the Gonski panel's review into the Australian education system. He adds that the best that the Australian education system can hope for from the review is that there is "a responsible, well informed and intelligent conversation regarding what education is about".

"I'd be surprised if the Gonski report was taken as a political blueprint for the future," he says, "but if it does facilitate and catalyse a proper conversation including educators, parents and the business community, it will have done its job – and it's a very important

However, Robinson points out that technology makes it possible give every student his or her own personal timetable.

"That's a huge liberation if we can do it," he says. "We have tremendous capacities for research through technologies, and that's a massive boon."

However, he adds, "what I hope technology won't replace are the particular qualities that human interaction brings about. This includes the deep connections that can come from people working together in the same space, and the expertise of good teachers professionally facilitating learning between groups of people."

Robinson adds that while society is still trying to understand the strengths, weaknesses and limitations of technology, it does represent an important development for schools.

"There's no doubt in my mind that digital technology will certainly transform education as it has everything else," he says. 