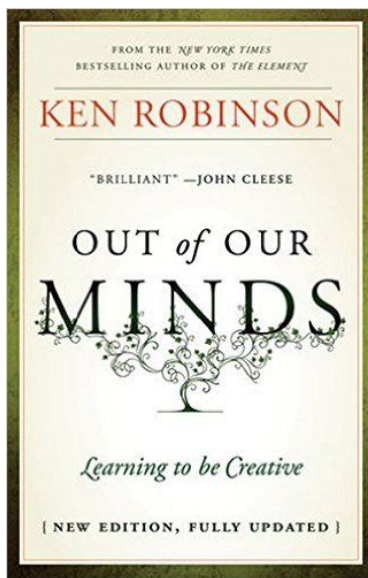


# OUT OF OUR MINDS: LEARNING TO BE CREATIVE

By: Sir Ken Robinson



## SUMMARY IN SHORT:

This book is not a story. It is not a memoir, or a collection of thoughts. What it is, is a guide book that all educators should read. If there was ever an aspect of education that needed to be readdressed it's that of the importance of creativity.

In this book Sir Ken Robinson debunks the myths of "the modern education" system, including the fact that the entire system is designed to stifle creativity, rather than cultivate it.



## WHAT EDUCATION IS AND WAS:

Education for the better part of human history was for the upper class. It was a social mechanism created and cultivated to make sure that the social divides were kept in place. The upper class could read, write, rule, and reign. The lower (or servant) class did all the work, took orders, and stayed in their place.

There was no place for upward mobility, and that's just the way it was. Your social status, career, and education was something you were born into, not something you aspired to. That is until the dawning of the Industrial Revolution in England in the 1760s.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

What Education Was and Is	P.1
Academic Illusion	P.2-3
What is Intelligence?	P.3
Being Creative	P.3
Arts and Science	P.3-5
Learning to be Creative	P.5
What needs to be done?	P.5-6
Evaluation	P. 6

EDUCATION HAS 3 CORE PURPOSES	
<b>Personal</b>	To develop students' individual talents and sensibilities
<b>Cultural</b>	To deepen their understanding of the world around them
<b>Economic</b>	To enable them to earn a living and be economically productive

(Robinson, 2011, p. 249)

What we know as the modern education system, was created as a way to make sure that all citizens had access to education. However; it was not created out of the goodness of the hearts of those in power. Nor was it created as a way to level the social playing field. The modern education system was created as a way to start training workers for factory life. Through to the 1860's more and more people were moving from rural areas into urban centres and converting from the uncertain lives of farmers to the more stable lives of factory workers. While some, like American educational revolutionary Horace Mann saw mass education "as the natural fulfillment of the principles of the Constitution"(Robinson, 2011, p. 54), while the reality is that many more, especially in the upper echelons of society, saw it as "the most efficient way of inculcating the working classes with the habits and disciplines that were essential to industrial production." (Robinson, 2011, p. 54). It may not seem like it from the outset but a deeper look reveals just how similar the organization and execution of education and factory work are. "Like factories, schools are special facilities with clear boundaries that separate them from the outside world .

They have set hours of operation and prescribed rules of conduct. They are based on the principles of standardization and conformity." (Robinson, 2011, p. 57) It's also hard to ignore, just how much education is like an assembly line. Students move from a starting point, grouped together by age, not by ability level (for the most part of course) or interest. They then pass through a collection of predetermined check points and all learn the same knowledge. They are all held to the same standard and if they falter or do not succeed, they are taken out, analyzed, repaired, and placed back into the system. Now of course I am being overly dramatic here, and massive changes have been put into in recent years, especially when students do have learning differences, however; by in large, the system is still shaped and organized in the same way that it was in the 1860s. It is at best, a mostly efficient way to make sure that young people learn something and can be successful and productive members of society once they exit the educational system, at worst however it is a system designed specifically to teach obedience and crush creativity and independent thought.

#### ACADEMIC ILLUSION

During the nineteenth and 20th centuries the classics became almost extinct in secondary education. In their place, the school curriculum settled into the now familiar hierarchy

where languages, mathematics, science and technology are at the top and the arts and humanities are at the bottom. And so, as James Hemming notably put it, the academic illusion came to replace the classical illusion: “the idea that only those are educated who can read horace in the original”(Robinson, 2011, p. 101)

#### WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE?:

Many people now seem to think that it is enough to roll out their IQ score for everyone to grasp how bright they are, or not. As a result of all this, the popular idea of intelligence has become dangerously narrow and other intellectual abilities are either ignored or underestimated. (Robinson, 2011, p. 85)

#### BEING CREATIVE

This is what the meat of Robinson’s book is about. It focuses on the need to find better ways to promote and encourage creativity. To let kids know that not only is it ok to not be just like everyone else, but that questioning and exploring, are what we as a species are best at. While work in science is often attributed to the “discoveries” that we make, it’s the exploration and creativity that make those scientific discoveries possible.

“*creativity is intelligence*  
having **FUN**”

- ALBERT EINSTEIN

#### ARTS AND SCIENCE

At the *Arts Work Conference*, Toronto (1992), Ken Robinson spoke about The Neglect of Arts in Schools which he also addresses in “Out of Our Minds”. During this session, Robinson continues to point out that whole education needs to be infused with both the analytical aspects of Math and Science and the creative aspects of the Arts.

<p><b>Developing the full variety of children's intelligence.</b></p>	<p>...The arts are fundamental ways of organizing our understanding of the world and call on profound qualities of discipline and insight. They must be included in education wherever schools are concerned to develop the full range of children's intelligence and abilities.</p>
<p><b>Developing the capacity for creative thought and action.</b></p>	<p>As the rate of change accelerates in all areas of social life, two qualities in young people are becoming more important - those of capability and adaptability ... Industry and commerce want those</p>

	<p>entering employment to show powers of innovation, initiative and application in solving problems and pursuing opportunities. These are widely held to be prerequisites for economic health. For the growing numbers of those for whom conventional employment is ceasing to be an option, these powers may be more important. Creative thought and action should be fostered in all areas of education. In the arts they are central.</p>
<p><b>The exploration of values.</b></p>	<p>Feelings are intimately concerned with values. Many for example are considered as vices or virtues - lust, envy, hope, despair, etc. The education of feelings is thus concerned with moral issues and the exploration of values. An education which sets out to help young people make sense of - and contribute to - the world in which they live must be concerned with helping them to investigate their own values and those of others. Artists are characteristically concerned with such things; with the evaluation and the re-evaluation of the world around them.</p>
<p><b>The education of feeling and sensibility.</b></p>	<p>No sensible person would doubt the value of intellectual activity and development. The danger lies in the separation of this from other capabilities. Mainstream Western philosophy since the seventeenth century has held that feelings and emotions disrupt the pursuit of knowledge through the intellect and should be disregarded in the classroom. Some have argued against this that the free expression of emotion is essential to healthy development, and this is the value of the arts in the schools. Both views divide intellect from emotion, thus neglecting the intimate relationships between them. The arts are not outpourings of emotion. They are disciplined forms of inquiry and expression that help to organize feelings and ideas about experience. The need for young</p>

	people to do this, rather than just to give vent to emotions or to have them ignored, must be responded to in schools. The arts provide the natural means for this.
<b>Understanding cultural change and differences.</b>	The arts are characteristic expressions of any culture and evolve as part of it. In a multicultural society, schools have important responsibilities with regard to cultural education. The arts are important here for two reasons. First, both the practical and the discriminating enjoyment of the arts involve observation, analysis, and evaluation of personal and social experience. Second, the products of the arts - plays, paintings, literature, music, dancing, sculpture, and so on - are integral parts of the social culture and are among those things children need to experience in coming to understand it.
<b>Developing physical and perceptual skills.</b>	Children need to be enabled not only to have ideas about the world, but to act on it. Natural abilities must be developed of a range of qualities and skills with a wide application and value.

(Ryan, 1994)

#### LEARNING TO BE CREATIVE

*“Education is not a linear process of preparation for the future: it is about cultivating the talents and sensibilities through which we can live our best lives in the present and create the future for ourselves”*

(Robinson, 2011, p. 245)

What needs to be done?

- If students are not learning, education is not happening. Clarity of purpose is vital.
- Provide personalized, effective and dynamic classroom instruction so that teachers have more time to focus on quality instruction.
- Create a place where children feel safe and challenged, where the emphasis is placed on creating a community where everyone supports one another
- Creativity is possible in every discipline and should be promoted throughout the whole of education
- Encourage students to be leaders, and encourage leaders to be visionaries
- Knit together academic, practical and vocational learning calibrated to the potential of each individual

- ❑ Invest in the intellectual development of the young person as well as the development of social and emotional competencies. These competencies are a major part of the foundations that allow every young person to learn effectively and contribute positively to their own development and attainment and to the development of a good society (Royal Society of the Arts, Educational Charter)
- ❑ Consistently refer to the three main related tasks for teaching creativity: Encouraging, Identifying, and Fostering
- ❑ Assess knowing that assessment has to take into account the creative process which may involve false starts, trial and error, and a series of successive approximations along the way to the finished work
- ❑ Take into account that the educational value of creative work lies as much in the process of conceptual development, as in the creation of the final product
- ❑ Remember that insensitive assessment can damage students' creativity and may encourage them to always take the safe option, avoiding experimentation and never learning how to correct their mistakes.

(Robinson, 2011, pp. 245-278)



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[https://www.ted.com/talks/ken\\_robinson\\_changing\\_education\\_paradigms](https://www.ted.com/talks/ken_robinson_changing_education_paradigms)

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## EVALUATION

### Pros:

- Incredibly insightful
- Funny and witty
- Well written and engaging
- Deep understanding of what education is, was, and should be
- Pulls back the blindfold and brings to light the truth of what the current education system is
- Aims to create a much better learning and teaching environment
- The man knows what he is talking about

### Cons:

- Very idealistic
- May not be able to do much of what was discussed
- Very long term
- While written about the world as a whole, the general focus is very much on education in the United States.

**Amazing!!! - 9.5/10**

## RESOURCES:

## Books:

Hemming, J. (1980). *The Betrayal of Youth: Secondary Education Must be Changed*. Boston, MA: Marion Boyers.

Robinson, K. (2011). *Out of Our Minds* (Updated ed.). Westford, MA: Capstone Publishing.

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(You Gotta See This)