

“What do you think you are doing?”

It is a great privilege to be asked to speak to you. I always enjoy talking to people who have chosen to take up the vocation of teaching.

I use the word vocation deliberately. Teaching is more than a job. More than a meal-ticket. Preparing yourself for becoming a teacher is more than gaining a qualification to improve one’s prospects of paid employment. If that’s what you think you are doing, you should stop now, because you will not have the ability to do the job well, nor with enjoyment, nor will you have the ability to endure through the difficulties and frustrations and challenges and disappointments that are inevitably part of the role.

The word “vocation” comes from the Latin word meaning “to call”. It’s been used to refer to religious vocations, to being “called” to become priests, for example. And when I was growing up, this notion of “being called” was a bit like being summoned to the principal’s office – it was something that somehow was seen to be contrary to one’s own desires and will, something that means self-denial and hardship.

But this is a very limited meaning. When I use the word “vocation” in relation to teaching, I mean that it is more like being **drawn** towards something because of its inherent beauty and attractiveness that appeals to us in some way, something that brings us, if not pleasure, then something much deeper, namely joy.

But be under no illusions. Teaching is a very difficult job, and even those with the best motivations can find it all too much and end up leaving the profession. You will make many mistakes in your career and sometimes be filled with self-doubt. So tonight I want to encourage you very strongly to reflect on how you will sustain yourselves through the many dark nights of the soul that will come your way as a teacher.

The first thing to say is that you need to be clear about what it is about teaching, and what it is about yourself, that has meant that you desire to be a teacher. This is about your own self-awareness, and I will have more to say about that later. For now, let me say that whatever your motivation, the thing that will sustain you is the look on a child’s face when, because of the work you have done with them, they realise they have come to know something that they didn’t before, and that consequently their world just got bigger.

The look of joy on the child’s face at the moment of insight, that is what will sustain you. Again, I’ll come back to this later



Secondly, as teachers, you need to have a clear vision about education’s purpose. You each need to have our own answer to the question: what is the purpose of education? It is essential that you have your own personal mission statement when it comes to your vocation as a teacher, a statement that answers the question , “What do you think you are doing?” You need to have your own educational philosophy.

Now some of you might wince at the word philosophy. It's a word that carries some baggage, because the image of a philosopher is of some beard-stroking old guy pondering the meaning of the universe, holed up in a library, but who is not practical, and can't operate in the real world.

But nothing could be further from the truth. Philosophy means love of wisdom, and if you're a teacher and you're not interested in wisdom, then "what do you think you are doing?"

Educational philosophy helps educators think deeply, critically, and creatively about the big issues related to human development in its emotional, intellectual, existential, social, cultural and spiritual dimensions, and helps educators relate these issues to their classroom practice. While you wrestle with real problems in the classroom, the staff room and the office, educational philosophy can help you to see how your practice contributes to the broader context, to raise your eyes from the road immediately at foot to consider the longer view, the greater good and the ultimate consequences of whatever it is you think you are doing.

Now, because education is fundamentally about the mind, a philosophy of education must depend fundamentally on an account of human consciousness. What do we think we are doing when we think? Without a clear and accurate grasp of what is going on in our own patterns and processes of thought, we are left simply to muddle through as best we can, living essentially in a world of "naïve realism", struggling with confusing or wrong-headed ideas about ourselves, our community, culture and society, about human life and what it means to be human, and ultimately ideas about "reality."

We can get by in education, sure enough, without a philosophy grounded in a robust theory of cognition, but it is very difficult to make substantive, fully satisfying progress in sorting through the complex and profound issues that face us today. In the end, as naïve realists, we may very likely end up being inadequate to meet deep challenges facing our profession and our culture more broadly. At best, understanding life's big issues and relating them to the grand enterprise of education would be "hit and miss."

Education today can often seem to be a matter of "muddling through," of chasing after this or that trend in popular culture and technology, of merely responding rather than taking the lead, and articulating matters of key concern and importance in education. Educators and administrators often seem to be led by issues of the day as defined by others, such as



"discipline," "standards," "back-to-basics," "ethics," "computer literacy," "social media" or "classroom design". These concerns may be important issues, but do *you*, do we as a profession, have any well-developed overarching framework with which to fully understand, assess, and decide on these issues in an integrative, comprehensive and fully satisfying way?

Muddling through often stems from a lack of understanding of what counts as real knowledge and draws on ideology, on mere opinion or simple belief. Often the result, perhaps reflecting certain post-modern tendencies, is a denigration of questions of epistemology and what counts as “knowledge”, or belief supported by evidence. Issues tend to be “solved” in terms of authority and power, or a catchy twitter phrase or sound-bite, or what gets us through the day, and not larger understandings of what it means to be human, of what constitutes community, culture, the movement of history, or the human good.

A further result of a retreat to largely biased-based positions appears as educators tend to become reactionary instead of constructive and developmental. And instead of having constructive professional conversations, we see debates about education played out on Edu-twitter with some resorting to unedifying *ad hominem* attacks.

But is there a way to improve the hit balance sheet, a way to better ensure more hits and less misses, a method we can use to evaluate the good, the bad and the ugly amongst all the issues and ideas about education that will confront you in your new roles? I believe there is. What we need is a philosophy of education that counters and corrects a “muddling through” approach, one based on a thoroughgoing and convincing account of human consciousness.



Bernard Lonergan, 1904-1984

So I want to lay out for you where I have come to on my journey of discovery in search of such a philosophy. My guide on this journey is someone who, despite being a dead white male, actually has something to offer. Bernard Lonergan, a Canadian Jesuit philosopher who lived from 1904-1984 was described by Time Magazine in 1970 as one of the greater thinkers of the 20th century. Despite this, Lonergan remains relatively unknown, but I think he does offer a sound approach to thinking about thinking, to thinking about what it is that we think we are doing.

It all starts with paying attention. I should warn you now, that as teachers, you will probably say that many, many times in the course of your career. “Pay attention”. Be attentive. Notice things. Be intentional in the way you pay attention. But what are paying attention to? Our **experience**.

As conscious, sentient human beings we have experiences and, as such, experiences of all kinds come flooding into consciousness. It’s not just sensory experience (hearing, seeing, touching and so forth) but experiences of images, feelings, emotions and thoughts—higher level experiences that tend to be more significant.

Another way to think about experiences is to regard them as “data.” Lonergan regards all experiences as data—data of sense and data of consciousness that include our thoughts and feelings about sense data. On the level of pure experience, consciousness remains somewhat

undeveloped, constantly receiving all sorts of data, good or bad, significant or trivial, from the world external to ourselves and from the inner world of feelings and thoughts.

Loneragan talks about four levels of consciousness.



Experiencing

Factual Questions

What?

When?

Who?

ATTENTION

On the first level, we pay attention to the data of experience, and we ask factual questions about what, when, who, etc. as a way of accessing more data that might help explain what is happening.

Experiences are the **first level** in the operations of human consciousness, but this includes not only sensory experiences with which we are all familiar, but also experiences of intelligence and understanding, of discernment and judgment, and experiences of deliberating and deciding. These “data of consciousness,” in addition to sensory data, become present to us in terms of how we “feel” about or thoughts and ideas, our judging and our deciding.

But even on this level of “pure” experience, patterns begin to emerge and sorting processes begin. Some data capture our attention and other data escape our notice or are noticed but immediately disregarded. Experiences run the scale from the superficial and inconsequential to those deemed rich and meaningful. But what is the difference in these various types of experiences and how does one deal with such a wide range of experiences on the basic level of conscious awareness?

So we bring our intelligence to the task of noticing patterns and asking questions for insight about what explains the data, what could cause these patterns? On this second level of consciousness, answers to these questions take the form of concepts and ideas and hypotheses that could explain the data of experience.

When one begins to have experiences they soon begin readily to fall into patterns, and those patterns begin to repeat (as is what patterns tend to do). As one example of an experience that tends to repeat, when you buy a Alfa Romeo, you very likely will notice every other Alfa you pass on the road.

In addition to repetitions, from a base in our experience we begin to wonder about things and begin to ask questions. Different types of questions have different functions and they anticipate different results. Early on, one main goal in question-asking is to gain insight or understanding. We ask “why” and “how come”?

Have you ever thought about what a marvelous experience it is to ask a question? Asking questions is one of the really exciting dimensions of being human. We are knowers, doers,



Understanding

Questions for insight

Why is this happening?

How do I make sense of this?

INTELLIGENCE

carers and lovers because we are question-askers. In so many ways, question-asking affirms our unique existence as conscious beings-in-the-world.

When you ask a really good question, it makes you feel really good. One often experiences a particular exhilaration when this happens. As we begin to ask questions, a fuller dynamism of our consciousness begins to unfold.



Understanding is achieved as we seek to make sense of the data of experience. Understanding occurs as we piece things together and create order out of the confusion or disorder that our “pure” experiences tend to be. Understanding unfolds when the significance and possible meanings of things are grasped. Meaning is what happens when the patterns of experience are grasped or conceptualized in some way, when ideas about how the elements of our experience are put together and interrelated. Deeper meaning occurs when greater levels and more complexities of interrelations are discovered.

Understanding is the occurrence of insight, of meaning, when we catch on intellectually to the way things are or could be in relation to other things. We have such acts of insight (acts of understanding) all the time. Some of them are very mundane and largely unnoticed, and some of them very dramatic, profound and life changing.

The phenomenon of understanding occurs as an intellectual “coming to life,” as it were. It can occur in a moment, in a flash of brilliance when one “sees the light,” when one “catches on.” Understanding can also occur in a painstaking process of study and struggle over weeks, months and even years leading to when an insight final surfaces in one’s consciousness. However it occurs, in solving a crossword puzzle or in developing a unified field theory, an emotional experience—a sense of satisfaction or an overwhelming exhilaration—can result, but then further questions can surface, “Is this really true?”; “Can I be mistaken?”

As human consciousness develops in healthy ways, we begin to wonder if our insights or the insights of others are completely wacky, reasonably accurate, or solidly correct and true. As we wonder about insights and understandings, new questions arise in the inquiring mind that propels one’s consciousness to a whole new level. On this level, we apply criteria for evaluating the different ideas, we become discerning, assessing the evidence. This then leads to acts of making a judgment. And when a judgment occurs our understanding becomes “knowledge.”



Judging

Reflective Questions

Is this so?

Which is (or most likely to be) true?

REASONABLENESS

Human beings, however, are not perfect creatures and thus not perfect knowers. In fact, we are prone to blind spots, to barking up the wrong tree, so to speak, to seeing only what we want to see and ignoring all sorts of important factors. In short, we are biased. We can adjust or correct some of these shortcomings and biases relatively easily and quickly but others we

cannot correct without a great deal of honesty, humility, self-awareness, effort and commitment to the value truth.

Questions arise as to how we can make the required assessment, achieve the needed discernment and overcome the personal issues that may stand in our way. In simplest terms, a good and true judgment about something rests upon knowing how well some particular understanding accounts for all the relevant data. Remember, there are data of sense and data of consciousness, and we account for these by concepts and by grasping possible meanings and obtaining understanding. Understanding, of course, can be correct or incorrect, or something in between.

On the level of judgment we raise the question as to how well concepts and suggested meanings we have answer all the questions that could be asked about some particular experience or set of data. In the process, we return to some possible explanation that we have settled upon, but then raise further questions about how well the explanation fits the data. In the process of judging, one moves toward a more solid and convincing answer as the questions become fewer and fewer. As the questions diminish, the understanding or explanation in question becomes more “secure,” and we approach a moment when we can make a sound judgment, “yes” or “no”, “maybe”.

Now, the probability that a judgment is true can move closer and closer to certainty only if one is truly open to unrestricted questioning. As this type of questioning proceeds, our answers and our assertions no longer have unanswered questions. All the relevant questions that can be posed have been posed and they have been answered in a satisfying way. We are at a place where a reasonable judgment can be made, and in a certain sense, we are compelled to do so. When this occurs, not only do we “understand” but we also “know.”

In brief, Lonergan’s theory of cognition is that human knowing is a dynamic structure that relates the functions of experiencing, understanding, and judging to one another. These are different levels of intentional consciousness, with each level linked to the next by different types of questions.

So knowing involves three kinds of mental activity or thinking, working together: first, attentively experiencing data; then gaining insight or understanding, through intelligent inquiry, about possible meanings and interpretations of the experienced data; then finally reflecting on, and judging reasonably about, which of these possible meanings is most likely to be true and real. Lonergan refers to this as the Generalised Empirical Method, that involves us following a set of what he calls “transcendental imperatives” if we want to come to know reality.

1. Be attentive to the data of experience.
2. Be intelligent in inquiring into that data and coming up with possible understandings.
3. Be reasonable when judging between the competing possibilities

Now I'm going to give you some homework. I want you to go and watch Alfred Hitchcock's "Dial M for Murder". The movie is about how a husband frames his wife – played by Grace Kelly – for murder.

As you watch, pay attention to the mental activity of the detective, Chief Inspector Hubbard, as he first goes about attending to the data and gathering evidence at the murder scene and interviewing persons of interest. Then he asks relevant questions of the data to formulate possible theories to explain the murder. This second level of consciousness actually involves creativity, or creative thinking, to imagine different ways in which the disparate bits of data could be assembled into a plausible theory, a coherent picture that makes the data intelligible. Then finally, Hubbard reflects critically on whether he has enough evidence to answer all the relevant questions, to be able to definitively affirm his theory that it is the husband who is the guilty party, not his wife, who was originally convicted and is on death row. Up until the final question is answered, the husband's guilt is just a theory. Once that question is answered, when he opens the door to his apartment using a key that only the guilty party would have, Hubbard is able to judge correctly that the husband is guilty. At that point, and not before, he knows the husband is guilty.



Attending to the data of experience



Inquiring intelligently about possible understandings of the data



Judging reasonably about the truth of competing possible explanations

Then, knowing the husband is guilty, inspector then sets in train the process to free the wife. He makes a decision to take responsible action according to his values, among which is a commitment to truth and to justice. This is the fourth level of intentional consciousness in Lonergan's system.

Now, when we think about the implications of this theory of consciousness for education, we can say a number of things.

At the most fundamental level, this understanding of human cognition and of how we come know things means that the essence of education is nothing other than to foster attentiveness, intelligence and reasonableness. Further we must foster the disposition that allows us to transcend our own biases and egos which might be very committed to incorrect explanations why things are the way things are. Our knowledge is always contingent, so we must be open to changing our minds in light of new information, new perspectives, new questions.



Deciding

Deliberative questions

What should I do?

How should I act?

RESPONSIBILITY

Let's take a couple of examples of how this theory of cognition can be of use to us in thinking through some current issue to do with the Australian curriculum which is currently under review.



First, you would all be aware, I hope that the Australian Curriculum has three dimensions: the eight learning areas, seven general capabilities, and three cross-curriculum priorities. Some critics of the Australian curriculum argue that the general capabilities, which include critical and creative thinking, are a distraction from the teaching of factual knowledge.

This is a bizarre claim, because not only are the general capabilities best taught through the learning areas as opposed to separate from them, but the stock of knowledge we have is itself the result of a process of creativity and critical thinking.

Consider the scientific method. When trying to explain some phenomenon or set of data, scientists don't automatically arrive at the correct explanation. They first come up with ideas or possible understandings for the phenomenon being studied. These ideas, concepts and propositions are competing candidates for truth. Coming up with these ideas is a creative process.

However, “bright ideas are a dime a dozen”, and if we want to move beyond a collection of possible explanations to the point where there is confidence that one of these contenders is the best, or the most likely of all of them to approximate reality, then we have to make a judgment between them, ie, exercise critical thinking.

Similarly, an artist, when painting a picture, will normally go through a process of drawing several versions of their subject; they will experiment with different colours and styles, and try out different possible ways of giving expression to their insights. But eventually, if they are actually to produce something, they must make a choice between these possible different approaches; they must exercise judgment according to some criteria and then act according to that judgment.

Consider other fields of human endeavour. For example, in engineering, the problem of building a bridge across a chasm gives rise to a range of ideas in response to questions about what materials to use, what style of bridge to construct (ie, suspension, beam, arch, truss, cantilever, or cable-stay?), and what should it look like from an aesthetic perspective.



Often competitions will be held for the design of public buildings, with architects submitting their designs after they've gone through a creative process which culminates in them making a decision about which of their many ideas is the best or most likely to win. Then the commissioning body has to make a decision, to exercise critical thinking and judgement to make a final call. So construction gets underway, but in the course of it, new problems arise, new questions have to be answered and solutions found, which requires another round of creative thinking and problem-solving, and so the cycle continues.

When it comes to the curriculum review, one of the messages we are wanting to get across very clearly is that the general capabilities, such as critical and creative thinking, are best taught and learnt in the context of the learning areas. This message will be much more easily communicated and intelligible if teachers can see how this relates to their teaching practice.

For example, consider the task the teacher of English literature has in helping students come to an understanding about what an author is intending to communicate when she writes a certain passage. The teacher will read the passage with the students and ask them, "What do you think the author is trying to say here? What point are they trying to make? What do they want us to feel about this character?"

In doing this, the teacher is asking the students to inquire into the data presented by the text, to ask questions about their own experience, to come at it from different angles, and then to suggest ideas or possible interpretations. A number of ideas will be proposed by the students. This is a creative process. Then the teachers' role is to ask them to support their interpretation with evidence from the text. Good students will be able to draw on their knowledge of the text and of the author's broader outlook to put forward a persuasive argument. They exercise their critical faculties and reason in coming to a judgment. Other students, when faced with the challenge of producing textual evidence for their proposed interpretation, will flounder and some will fall back on "That's just my opinion, and I am entitled to my opinion." To which the teacher should reply, "You are entitled to an opinion that is supported by evidence."

Scenes like this can be played out in history classes, science classes, art classes, woodwork classes, and mathematics classes, with only minor variations according to the nature of the learning area or discipline.

Furthermore, if you are able to understand how critical and creative thinking work together and are reflected in your practice (as just outlined), you will be able to point out to the students the thinking processes that they undertook in the course of their learning, thus

helping the students develop meta-cognitive confidence. You will ask you students: “Did you notice what we did there? We started with a text; we inquired into what it might mean; we generated possible explanations and theories; then tested those ideas against evidence; we applied criteria for judgement to those possibilities and arrived at a conclusion that is defensible and in which we can be confident. But then further experience, data, information and perspectives call that initial conclusion into question, and we repeat the process.”

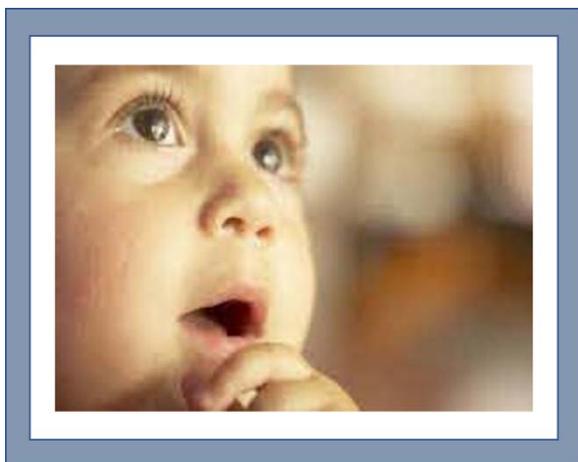
Another argument that is doing the rounds at the moment that says the three cross-curriculum priorities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures, Asia and Australia’s engagement with Asia, and Sustainability, is somehow denigrating Australian society, its history and heritage, or distracting students from the real business of education, namely literacy and numeracy.

But literacy and numeracy are not for their own sake. They are developed so we are able to engage in these discussions. It’s not a question of one or the other. And we cannot meaningfully engage with other societies and cultures unless we have a good understanding our own. The judgments current in our society or any other, whether matters of common sense, science, or value, are to be affirmed not as unquestionable dogmas, but simply as the best that attentiveness, intelligence, and reasonableness have come up with thus far, even though those judgements may have been affected by collective bias.

As new circumstances arise, there is more evidence to be attended to and more hypotheses to be envisaged which will, in time, render many of these judgments liable to modification or even outright rejection.

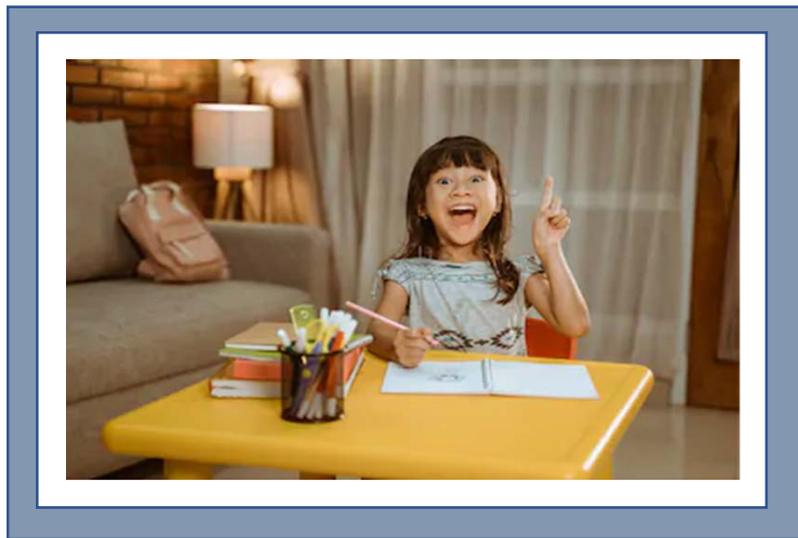
Education, then, must keep consciousness open and flexible by way of expanding it through the realization of how others have experienced, understood, judged, and decided. In other words, education must foster critical respect for our past, for the culture we have inherited, always leaving open the possibility of amending cultural practices in response to new realities and new questions. Teaching for a globalised world calls for a reflective openness to the wider world but at the same time nurtures a reflective loyalty to the concerns, commitments and values of one’s own society.

This brings me to the last topic I want to talk about tonight: what makes good teachers.



There is nothing more important in life than to have a purpose that is bigger than yourself. In this respect, teachers are to be envied. As teachers, you have such a purpose. You have such a guiding principle, an overarching value which orients your professional choices. Your goal is to foster attentiveness, intelligence and reasonableness so that your students can expand the knowledge, skills and understanding of themselves and the world, and eventually shape their individual and collective future for themselves.

As a former teacher myself, I know that nothing gives a teacher greater joy than when, after having introduced them to some new information or some difficult problem, you see them move through wonder, through the struggle of inquiry, to the moment of insight when the student suddenly “gets it”, they have that “Eureka!” moment, the “Aha!” experience of joy, when all the pieces of the puzzle fall into place and they gain insight and understanding. This is what teachers live for, to see that look of joy in their students faces. As I said at the start of this talk, there is nothing like it.



No other occupation offers as many ways to help others learn and grow in their most formative years and take responsibility for their own lives. As a student and as a teacher, to my current role as the CEO of ACARA, I’ve been fortunate to meet many good teachers – but what makes a teacher great?

First, great teachers will always **aspire to be the best teachers they can be**.

They will be open to learning, they will aspire to excellence and will constantly think about ways to improve their practice. They won’t just adopt change for change’s sake because they know that not all change leads to improvement. They will think critically, evaluating carefully the latest trends to sort fad from fact. They won’t be taken in by new theoretical baubles that are shiny on the outside and vacuous beneath the surface. They will take their professional learning seriously, evaluating those experiences and offerings through the lens of whether it is going to lead them to changing the way they teach for the benefit of their students.

Second, great teachers are **team players**. This relates to the self-awareness I was just talking about. Great teachers will work as a team and bring to bear that same intellectual humility and commitment to continuous improvement through professional conversations and self-assessment.

Through modelling, mentoring, providing feedback, goal-setting and leading professional conversations, you will help build the collective efficacy of your colleagues, that sense that they make a bigger difference when they are part of a bigger team.

Regardless of whether you have any positional formal authority within a team, you can exercise leadership through your self-awareness and humility, through your ingenuity and creative approach to problems, your courage to speak up and say what you think, and the care and concern you demonstrate for your colleagues.

Third, a great teacher will be **respected and respectful**, able to create environments where learning can happen. When I was training to be a teacher, at the end of my first practice round, the Dean of Studies at the school told me: ‘There are two types of teachers: popular and successful. You were popular.’ Ouch!

Obviously, the Dean of Studies didn’t mean to say all good teachers are unpopular. He himself was well-liked, but he wouldn’t admit that. His point was that my relationship with my students is fundamentally a professional one, and that the measure of a good teacher is the learning that takes place.

Certainly, great teaching involves having a good relationship with students. But those good relationships are based on trust, expertise and respect, on being fair, being reliable, being a person of your word, being a person who offers structure and consistency in order to provide a classroom environment where learning happens.

It is true that, often, the realities of the classroom and the school seem light years away from such elevated visions of teaching. Rowdy kids, unsettled Friday afternoons, outbreaks of bullying, encounters with parents who are either too demanding, or not demanding enough – all these occur and place far more immediate challenges on teachers. Teaching is a challenging profession.

But, as many teachers know, it is often through these experiences, not in spite of them, that teachers find the way to relate to their students professionally, which puts their needs as learners at the forefront.

Fourth, that trust of which I just spoke is based on **deep subject matter expertise**.

Many of us, in choosing to become teachers, may have been inspired by great teachers we had at school – people who showed they were committed to our intellectual and personal development by the way they taught. In particular, it was their deep knowledge and passion for their subject that was inspiring.

I had a number of such teachers, but one stands out in particular. His name was Kevin Garrity and he was my HSC maths teacher. He was slightly eccentric. He wore a t-shirt with “I love Maths”. Kevin would set us tricky calculus problems, and as he wandered around the room, he would often wave a hand-held fan over us. One day, I asked him, ‘Sir, what are you doing?’ and he replied, ‘I am fanning the flames of wonder!’. ‘Fanning the flames of wonder’ is the best summary I have ever heard of the role of teaching.

Fifth, a great teacher has the ability to **inspire students to ask more questions**, not just to answer them. Their role in leading students to knowledge is not to satisfy their desire for

knowledge, but exactly the opposite: it is to make them hungrier and thirstier for more – more knowledge, more skills, more understanding.

A good lesson will conclude with students knowing they have learnt something, but a great lesson will conclude with students being unsatisfied with what they've learnt, wanting to learn more, and asking more questions. That's fanning the flames of wonder. That's great teaching.

And the nature of their questions will branch out into an ever-widening circle of interests and concerns. Which brings me to a final dimension of great teachers.

A great teacher will have self-awareness. Not only aware of their own authority and expertise and efficacy, they will also be aware that they never stop learning and growing.



*"Know Thyself!"
Temple of Apollo, Delphi, Greece*

The earliest known curriculum document was a two-word inscription on the Temple of Apollo at Delphi in Greece. It read simply, 'Know yourself'. Knowing yourself and examining one's life in a systematic and fundamentally honest way, so as to become wise – this is the most profound outcome of a successful education.

Developing in students a commitment to thoughtful, honest, purposeful human agency, respectful of others and embracing the common concerns of one's communities, this is the wider objective of the calling of a teacher: to help young people come to know themselves and the power they have to change the world.

In conclusion, then, education engages students within a given tradition of culture, language, thought, structure, but also opens the way to new formulations that will keep the tradition alive, as something that continues to grow is alive. An education system that functions out of this ideal will honour students' questions because questions and inquiry arise when human intelligence and wonder - the eros of the human spirit - attends to the movement of life as experienced.

When teachers and others responsible for education understand that creativity is a by-product of the process of coming to know, we can guide students to tune in to the movement of life as experienced, to ask their own questions, to articulate in some form their insights, and to critically assess the truth of those insights.

In doing so, we provide students with hope and the opportunity to contribute creatively to the world in need of transformation. Our conversations about knowledge and the world under construction will flourish from the creative and critical thinking of a new generation of knowers who have learned that they have minds, and that they know how to use them for the common good.

This is the enterprise upon which you are about to embark. It is not only the most important job in the world, it is the most important job for the world. I thank you for your commitment to it and wish all the best for your most promising futures as teachers.