**Responses to *Ken Robinson: How to escape education’s death valley* video response sheet**

**Q1: What is the major assumption made by Sir Ken Robinson in this TEDTalk?**

Beneath the surface of the current education system, which at present is ‘command and control’ culture lead from above, are the seeds of possibility, waiting for the right conditions to flourish and make it a culture of ‘climate control’ where education takes place in the classrooms of the local school.

**Q2: List 5 – 7 main points he makes about the public school system in the USA.**

* The educational system in America is more of a mechanical system instead of a human system, leading to more than 50% of students dropping out of school for various reasons (they find learning boring or irrelevant or school life interferes with their life outside school)
* Alternative educations programs have been established to re-engage students back into the education system. These programs are personalised, provided a strong support for teachers, have close links with their community, deliver of a broad and diverse curriculum and these programs involve students outside school as well as inside school. If these points were applied to all schools we did not have to have an alternative education program.
* Although schools try to find out what kids can do, it is done across a very narrow spectrum as the American education system is based on conformity, not diversity.
* The profession of a teacher is not valued enough, and too much discussion is focussed on education without discussing learning and the role the teacher can play.
* There seems to be a culture of compliance and standardisation and teachers are encouraged to follow a routine route where the focus has shifted from teaching and learning to testing and as such obstructing learning, instead of supporting it.
* More investment should be made to support the teachers, for example in the form of professional development (PD). PD should be seen as an investment, not a cost.
* Responsibility for education should be at a school level, not, as it currently is, at a state or federal government level –a ‘command and control’ system.

**Q3: What are the three principles on which, he states, human life flourishes? Outline them in more than a one or two word response.**

There are three principles that flourish / drive human life:

1. Human beings are all naturally different and diverse. Kids do best at school when there is a broad spectrum curriculum that stimulates and encourages their many talents (intelligences).
2. Children are natural learners; stimulate their curiosity and they will learn without further assistance. As a teacher you are therefore more than the deliverer of information. The teacher is a facilitator of learning; one who mentors, stimulates, provokes and engages the student.
3. Human life is inherently creative and the role of the teacher (education system) is to awaken the powers of creativity within the student so that they can imaging alternatives and possibilities and as such create and re-create their own lives.

**Q4: Reflect on one of the principles by writing an anecdotal description of an incident where one of these principles was in evidence. It might refer to you, a current or past student or your own child.**

*Human beings are all naturally different and diverse* – I have two children; both attended circus arts and were asked to try out for the specialised, invitation only circus school and both were accepted. However, the one who thrives on taking notes, writing and re-writing questions and answers and is able to memorise multiple definitions (is she able to see the explanation behind the definition?) chose not to accept the invitation to attend this school, but to go to a mainstream school. For my other (younger) child, who dislikes anything that has words associated with it, and rather creates things out of Lego (without instruction manuals) it was the only option to keep him in the education system and to ensure he is able to read and write when he is an adult. Six years later he is still there, loving it, and although not the top student is overall not doing too bad and even reading the occasional book.

**Q5. What does he say all high performing education systems do? (three main things)**

High performing education systems implement the following aspects:

1. They individualise teaching and learning – the education system engages the student’s individuality, curiosity and creativity to facilitate learning
2. They contribute a high status to the teaching profession, which shows in providing ongoing support and opportunity for professional development
3. Instead of a governmental ‘command and control’ educational system, responsibility for the process of education is at ground / school level in the classrooms

**Q6. Reflect on one of these factors in relation to your institute, from your perspective.**

For a while there was a big push to have all courses on our Moodle system. The reason behind this push was never fully explained. Just do it, almost like a command. Although Moodle is a great platform, one needs to assess each qualification, each unit of competence, to establish their suitability for delivery via Moodle. An added question should be if Moodle should be the sole platform or an addition to face-to-face delivery. Working in Community Services & Health means that a lot of units have hands-on components which require ingenuity to deliver and do not lend themselves for delivery and assessment solely via Moodle. Industry experts often teach specialist units and it would be great to allow these teachers the freedom and responsibility to decide how best to facilitate learning these components. Also, it cannot hurt to admit that not all qualifications can be delivered in a distance (Moodle) mode.