

## Sir Kenneth Robinson

### Student at Bretton Hall

#### English and Drama

1968-71

*[Profile by courtesy of Wikipedia - Oct. 2014]*

**Sir Kenneth Robinson** (born 4 March 1950) is an English author, speaker and international advisor on education in the arts to government, non-profits, education and arts bodies. He was Director of the Arts in Schools Project (1985–89), Professor of Arts Education at the University of Warwick (1989–2001), and was knighted in 2003 for services to art.



*Ken Robinson at Bretton  
c. 1970*

#### Early life and education

Born in Liverpool, Merseyside, to James and Ethel Robinson, Robinson is one of seven children from a working class background. After an industrial accident, his father became quadriplegic. Robinson contracted polio at age four. He attended Margaret Beavan Special School due to the physical effects of polio then Liverpool Collegiate School (1961–1963), Wade Deacon Grammar School, Cheshire (1963–1968). He then studied **English and drama (BEd) at Bretton Hall College of Education, University of Leeds (1968–1971)** and completed a PhD in 1981 at the University of London, researching drama and theatre in education.

#### Career

From 1985 to 1988, Robinson was Director of the Arts in Schools Project, an initiative to develop the arts education throughout England and Wales. The project worked with over 2,000 teachers, artists and administrators in a network of over 300 initiatives and influenced the formulation of the National Curriculum in England. During this period, Robinson chaired Artsworld, the UK's national youth arts development agency, and worked as advisor to Hong Kong's Academy for Performing Arts.

For twelve years, he was professor of education at the University of Warwick, 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 honoured 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 was made Knight Bachelor by the Queen 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.



Sir Kenneth Robinson (c. 2005)

In 1998, he led a UK commission on creativity, education and the economy and his report, *All Our Futures: Creativity, Culture and Education* was influential. *The Times* said of it: "This report raises some of the most important issues facing business in the 21st century. It should have every CEO and human resources director thumping the table and demanding action". Robinson is credited with creating a strategy for creative and economic development as part of the Peace Process in Northern Ireland, publishing *Unlocking Creativity*, a plan implemented across the region and mentored the Oklahoma Creativity Project. In 1998, he chaired the National Advisory Committee on Creative and Cultural Education.<sup>[3]</sup>

In 2001, Robinson was appointed Senior Advisor for Education & Creativity at the Getty Museum in Los Angeles, which lasted at least until 2005.

### **Ideas on education**

Robinson has suggested that to engage and succeed, education has to develop on three fronts. First, that it should foster diversity by offering a broad curriculum and encourage individualisation of the learning process; secondly, it should foster curiosity through creative teaching, which depends on high quality teacher training and development; and finally, it should focus on awakening creativity through alternative didactic processes that puts less emphasis on standardised testing thereby giving the responsibility for defining the course of education to individual schools and teachers .

He believes that much of the present education system in the United States fosters conformity, compliance and standardisation rather than creative approaches to learning. Robinson emphasises that we can only succeed if we recognise that education is an organic system, not a mechanical one. Successful school administration is a matter of fostering a helpful climate rather than "command and control".

## Writing

*Learning Through Drama: Report of the Schools Council Drama Teaching* (1977) was the result of a three-year national development project for the UK Schools Council.

Robinson was principal author of *The Arts in Schools: Principles, Practice, and Provision* (1982), now a key text on arts and education internationally.

He edited *The Arts and Higher Education*, (1984), co-wrote *The Arts in Further Education* (1986), *Arts Education in Europe*, and *Facing the Future: The Arts and Education in Hong Kong*.

Robinson's 2001 book, *Out of Our Minds: Learning to be Creative* (Wiley-Capstone), was described by *Director* magazine as "a truly mind-opening analysis of why we don't get the best out of people at a time of punishing change." John Cleese said of it: 'Ken Robinson writes brilliantly about the different ways in which creativity is undervalued and ignored in Western culture and especially in our educational systems.

*The Element: How Finding Your Passion Changes Everything*, was published in January 2009 by Penguin. *The element* refers to the experience of personal talent meeting personal passion. He argues that in this encounter, we feel most ourselves, most inspired, and achieve to our highest level. The book draws on the stories of creative artists such as Paul McCartney, 'Simpsons' creator Matt Groening, Meg Ryan, and physicist Richard Feynman to investigate this paradigm of success.